

The Beat Within

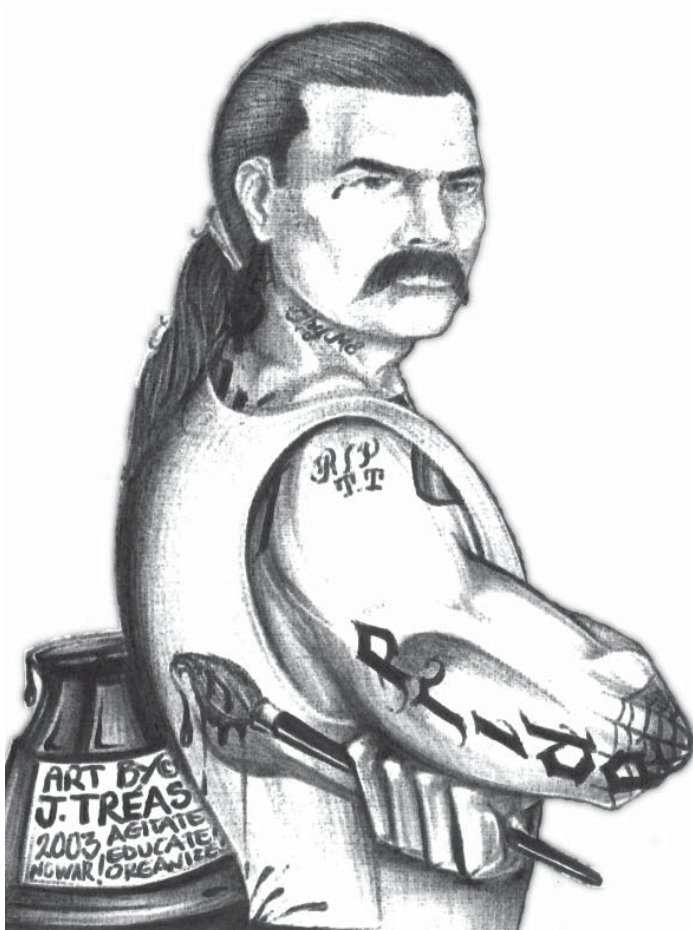
A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside



Volume 9.30

Many of you already know my story. It is ugly and beautiful at the same time. In my 16 months of freedom I have been doing all that I can to make up for those years of freedom lost and to work with the youth that are now caught up in the system and facing the same trenches I had to endure life in for sooooo long.

-To read Jason "Coopa" Tréas' amazing story in its entirety go to page 64 in The BWO



What a morning we experienced this past Wednesday! Several of us were very, very fortunate to be in the presence of our multitalented and very loyal comrade, Jason "Compa" Tréas.

Jason, in a sense, returned to his roots, B5, the max unit in SF/YGC, where he not only spoke to the young men housed there, but took them on a wild ride, the wild ride of his life, all the while challenging them, educating them, and sharing plenty of the important information only he can offer. Simply put, no counselor, no PO, no lawyer, could offer what Jason shared that morning.

Mind you, this is the same exact unit where Jason was held for more than thirteen months back in 1993, as a 16-year-old, where he was charged as an adult in a very, very serious high-profile case.

We should add, Jason gained plenty of respect from staff during his time there, but also made a "name" for himself. Jason Tréas has become an infamous individual in the minds of those who were at SF/YGC in 1993, and with his contributions, from numerous cover art pieces to knockout commentaries for *The Beat Within* over the years, his name has stayed in the minds of many who work in the system. Seeing Jason walk through the metal detector at SF/YGC and be embraced with hugs and handshakes from the director of the hall to probation officers and frontline counselors was a real sight to see!

We wish you readers could have had the experience today of listening to Compa, who truly paid the price (from SF/YGC to YA, and by his 18th birthday, to the reception unit in San Quentin State Prison, which eventually led him to the hole in SQSP's death row, mainline at New Folsom, then Ad Seg as a validated gang member. Eventually, due to his validation, the last seven years of his incarceration were spent in the notorious SHU (Security Housing Unit) in Pelican Bay State Prison where the men spend close to 23 hours a day in solitary confinement.

Of all the engagements Jason has been a part of since he started working with *The Beat* when he paroled 16 months ago, this one definitely had the most meaning. He truly spoke from the heart in his old juvenile hall lockup, SF/YGC B5.

Jason's ride was like many of yours — in the hall, a rider, down for the cause, soldier for life. This was the beginning of the ride many of us Beat readers know oh so well, be it Jason's story or your own. From the Hall to prison. Period!

Watching Jason bring the pages of *The Beat* to life was priceless. This is exactly what this editor and Jason used to discuss back in the early days of *The Beat* when we would exchange numerous letters about the day he would return to the hall to embrace the latest generation of young men living within the walls of the system. And this past Wednesday this reality, finally, came to life.

What Jason gave was priceless, his life! His personal story! For close to two hours he held center stage, captivating these young men like they were in church and he was the preacher man! Jason's return to the hall was not just a homecoming of sorts, it was a closing, and a beginning, too. Returning to the same max unit, seeing the OG counselors, and smelling that juvenile smell . . . was very overwhelming as well as therapeutic. Seeing the cell you were housed in, getting to talk to the young men who were you at an earlier life. Powerful, yet sad in a sense because not that much has changed — poor folk of color incarcerated in a shady system to say the least.

Nevertheless, this is what *The Beat Within* is all about. Jason is the epitome of the Beat. He spoke about how he changed from that young person who claimed his town, to the person he is today, a person who recognizes how much more he has in common with every young person raised like you in every 'hood and every gang. And he made the point that until that lesson of unity is learned, you will always be on the losing end of society.

Today, Jason is totally off the streets that raised him, unless he is tracking down a young person, attempting to save them from further destruction. Now he's into the big, bad and scary legit world, making a difference. Bringing his knowledge to life. From the pages of *The Beat* to the streets, the schoolhouse, the Boys and Girls clubs, Walden House, and the politicians/policymakers and journalists who try to understand and care.

He is not the first colleague to return to B5; we've had plenty of others over the years, which were meaningful, too, but Jason's story, his charisma, and his commitment to self, made seeing him tell his story for close to two hours to this

captivated audience of respectful young men was priceless.

Jason was there for all you guys who know SF/YGC B5, let alone any max unit, any juvenile hall USA. Jason was there for every one of you readers of *The Beat Within*. He would make every single one of you readers proud, no matter what your race, your religion, or your politics.

Hey, if *The Beat Within* ever wrote that coffee table book for the masses, Wednesday's encounter in SF/YGC B5 would be its own chapter, titled "Compa's Return," or shall we say it again? "Priceless." Jason is *The Beat Within*; Jason, in part, is you. Now let's hope this is only the start of Jason venturing into juvenile halls and touching and saving lives from further destruction. He's very special. Thank you, Jason.

Look for Jason's take on this historical moment in his life on pages 64-65.

Moving along, the topics discussed leading up to the writing that packs these pages were: "The Victim — If you had the chance to meet your victim or his/her family, would you want to? Why or why not? What would you say to your victim? Do you feel any remorse towards your victim? Because of your actions, what do you think he/she is going through? How has your victim's life changed because of you? Do you feel hostile towards or angry at your victim? Who is your victim? A stranger? A rival? A family member/mom or dad? Yourself?

On another tip, what do you think your victim would say to you? Do you think they hold any resentment towards you or have they forgiven you? What do you think their family would say to you? What would you hope to get from meeting your victim?

If you wouldn't want to meet your victim, would you at least want to write a letter to him/her? If this is all too farfetched for you, tell us, in an appropriate way, why do you hate your victim?"

Second, "If You Could Make A Law — We know that for most of you, your interaction with the law has been negative. But can the law be used to help you and other people?

If you could pass your own law, what would that law be and why? For instance, if you could pass a law requiring the judge or his or her children to spend a week in juvenile hall just to see what it's like, would you? Or what if there was a law that every person had to have their college tuition paid for? What if there was a law that the sun had to shine 300 days a year? What if there were a law saying ice cream had to be served with every meal? Or on a more realistic tip, would you change the three strikes law, how and why? What law would you pass to really lower violence and crime? Could you create a law that would eliminate poverty?

Why would you choose to create this law? How will this law help you or the people it was made for? What would this law change?

So lawmaker, what law would you pass?"

Finally, "I love it when . . ."

From the writings, we came up with a host of POW (Piece of The Week) recipients, they are Clepto, Smelly Mel, Friskie, O-Dog, Alfred M, and Young Man from San Mateo; Sasha from Maricopa/SEF in Arizona; Esequiel from Santa Cruz; and Young Smokey, Angelica, Lil' Jepeabo, and Abbas for the 150 Crew. Props to these writers and all of our co-POW writers, too.

Oh yeah, don't forget our latest editor's note writing contest! The good news for some of you is that our deadline has been pushed forward to August 31, 2004. So, if you are up to the task, you still have time to submit your essay! The contest question is, what is your all-time favorite movie and why? Do you like love stories, horror, crime and punishment, or musicals? What was it about that movie you loved so much? Was it actually the movie or the story that led up to or revolved around the movie? Top prize for this contest is a \$100 money order, followed by a \$50 money order for second, while third and fourth places will earn the writers \$25 each.

How can we close this issue without dedicating this incredibly powerful issue filled with history, history that nearly every one of you, most likely, contributed to in some form or another, to our amazing colleague and friend, Jason "Compa" Tréas. We truly love this man. We hope someday soon you, too, can embrace him with a hug and handshake after hearing him tell his story, be it in the local juvenile or in the community. Thanks again, Jason, for being so dedicated to this cause, *The Beat* cause. You truly relate, give hope, and understand the power you have, and from this, and more, you are making a huge difference in all of our lives. This issue is for you, Jason. Thank you.

Read on; see you next week . . .

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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**i learn from history
my kids say daddy
i'm smooth
as a cadì'
i live life gladly
i make others happy**

There's more to people than meets the eye. To look at Chief Dawg, a large, buff man and a counselor at Hillcrest, you wouldn't at first see the sensitive human being who could write the following poems. It's another lesson in "You can't judge a book by its cover." We are honored, once again, to present these four wonderful poems.

I Love My Son

I love it when I get to see my son
I love it when he gives me a hug
I love it when I have to chase him around
I love it when he say, "Daddy, sit down!"
I love it when he is fast asleep
I can't wait to kiss him on his cheek
I love it when my dad used to come home
I love it when he sat in his favorite chair
Because often when I came into the room, he was not there
I love it when we would just go outside
I love it when we would go for a ride
I love it when I do the things with my son that I did not do
with my dad
I hate it when my son is sad
I hate it when he wants to leave work
I often get down and my feelings get hurt
I love my son every night and day
I love you, EJ

-Chief Dawg

A Time To Think

I love it when I am free, free as a bird, free as I can be.
I love it when I was on the outs,
ya know, roaming free and nothing to care about.
I love it when my time did not count.
I could hang with my dawgs, holla at chicks and clown.
I love the things that bring me joy.
I loved them so much that now I cry.
Attempts to escape each day I try.
Inside my head is a battlefield.
It's trapped with moments of joy,
smiles, happiness and tears.
I love it when my eyes are closed.
I can imagine that I am free,
free as the damn bird, free as freedom can be.
I love it when I get a visit from my mom.
Now I love to think that my crime was so damn dumb.

-Chief Dawg

I'm Sorry, Mom

I regret the time when I did not come home
I regret the time I left Moms alone
I regret the times I kept her up late
I regret the time that I saw disappointment in her face
I regret when the school would be her workplace
I regret the times that I made her sad and I did not give a damn
I regret the times I treated her less than dirt
I regret the times that she felt like giving up
Mom, it wasn't you, it was me that screwed up
Tomorrow is not guaranteed and yesterday is gone.
A chance to be forgiven is a reason to live on.
I love you.

-Chief Dawg

Quote of Quotes

Never argue with a fool
Because they will only drag you down
To their level and beat your ass
With experience...
Don't be fooled by a fool...

-Chief Dawg

We want to welcome a new contributor to The Beat's "Counselor's Corner" — L Bo, who writes this week from AlaCo aka 150. Now he's not trying to preach, just share; but we think he has something to teach! We're grateful he cares, and we appreciate his being there.

I Love It When ...

i get problems off my chest
the weather is nice and the air is fresh
my mood is good
i do the best i possibly could
i do what i know i should
i learn a lesson
i receive a blessin'
my hair is neat
my tasks are complete
i got my mojo goin'
the money is flowin'
i pass a test
i have no confessions to confess
i'm in the zone
i am at home
i put together the perfect blend
i have a big bankroll to spend
when the music slumps
it feels so good i get goose bumps
my wife cooks a meal
the lord mends my wounds and i heal
i give a helping hand
i fulfill my duties as a man
i receive the love
i see family although we don't share the same blood
my shoes are crispy
i learn from history
my kids say daddy
i'm smooth as a cadì'
i live life gladly
i make others happy

-L Bo, 150 Counselor

Breakfast

With senior year out of the way, hot summer days gave way to wild nights, camping on the beach with close friends, and with a heavy cast of late fall humidity, snowboarding, and long-sleeves were traded in for coastal fog, and fresh, seaside chill. Additional to the long list of qualities, my girl and best friend are like family, leaving no need to balance relationships. With the little dedication I had, I worked weekdays at a part-time job, and although weekdays got pretty busy, it was easily accustomed to delicious B-B-Qs and late bonfires at secluded caves along Devil's Slide.

As usual, I wake up well rested on Friday morning and recall notice to a purple haze party in San Francisco. Carefully, I rolled off my bed and tiptoed to the door, so to not wake my girlfriend. After a flashback of the previous night, a shower was most certainly in line, but before I had adjusted to the cold water, I was covered in kisses. One after another until hot spray, and warm lips kindled sensations of desire, of rushing water, thick steam, and open curves. Fresh of soapy tale and peaches, I am introduced to a whole new aroma stepping into the kitchen.

In the casual dungeon of cast iron and an indoor garden, we sit at a contemporary style bar, while my mother cooks bacon, eggs, biscuits, and homemade salsa. The light is dim and cast shadows across the counters, covered with bowls of flour, sugar, chopped tomatoes, and grilled onions. Thick slices of peppered bacon leave me in a dream world echoed with screaming tea pots, hissing grease, and Miles Davis.

After an enormous breakfast and building the courage to stand up, my girlfriend and I drove to Montero to meet Justin, (one of my best friends) to surf for a few hours. The air was salty and frigid, the waves were perfect with barreling cops near the North Shore. I love the way tourists stare in awe as if we were walking into certain death, then are shocked when we dive into the near frozen ocean water.

After about two hours, I was done, but Rachel, (my girlfriend), has not surfed in over a month, so we stay 'till around four-thirty. After makeshift showers with the parking lot hose and rounds of tacos at "Three Amigos," it's concluded we camp under the stars at "the drop," a leaf lighted grove of sand and grass stretching to the shore break of Rock Away Beach.

So we go back to my house and rummage through rooms to gather supplies in ten minutes of hectic packing. With a total of two tents and firewood, enough Bacardi to last a week, and a clustered pile of blankets and pillows, we set off on our journey. Arriving ten minutes after Justin and his friend Johnny, there was an assortment of pads and dusty sleeping bags circled around a roaring fire. Three pizza boxes, alcohol, ocean view and much more, we were either preparing to

entertain a small army or engage in a night that was not to be forgotten.

After laughing until I lost my breath, the odds were in favor that nothing could be better. Much was I mistaken after a few drinks over the topic of physical impairments and a game of cardless strip poker. I started drifting over patches of sand and shrub, when I felt a hand, distinctive in purpose and only matched with the soft whisper of tempting promises.

I felt numb of burning alcohol pump through my skin, but once in the tent I was alive with desire. A devouring ache deep in my stomach that spread shivers along my spine and out through my fingertips. She really is beautiful, creamy skin lost in waves of thick black hair and gem like eyes. My head was spinning, taut breast, flush skin, and warm bodies painted with the flicker of dancing flames. In my head I hear the hollow sounds of laughter, spitting embers, and the surf pound on solid cliffs. I hear crickets, the rhythmic intervals of warm breath in thin ocean air. And with all this I hear my friend telling me it is time for breakfast.

Fast, before I can breathe, the skin, the laughter, the lights are gone. The fresh air replaced with a stale must. The warm fire is cooled with an itchy state-issued blanket. The dreams as if leaves cracked with the warm rays of sun scattered through splinters in scratched glass and heavy bars.

Lost love and pause from reality hit hard, as the love of my life, the one who helped me overcome fears, and stood by me for over three years is now lost, and found in the arms of my best friend as they preview the fruits of a newly sought companionship. My mother's cooking in Oregon with her new marriage. And the ocean still, quiet, and through the conclusive arrangements of mindless criminals, I and many alike have lost our oceans, our lifestyles, and our loved ones. So until your time, don't let go of dreams. It is in faults we find growth and in dreams we hold hope.

I'll write again after breakfast.

-Clepto, San Mateo

From The Beat: We already told you to do your own responses because you leave us nearly wordless (and always breathless), so why are we here again with our minds blown trying to recuperate so we can respond to this wonderful piece? It seems as if you took this heart-breaking experience rather well. Or maybe that's just the way it was written. How did you react to that? If you knew back then what you know now, do you think you would've done something differently? Why or why not? We can't wait for you to finish your breakfast...

Within Ourselves

Passing days like autumn leaves fall to years; swept to a pile and burnt and extinguished. Without warning, torrential rains cleans heart, soul, and debris. Together like a kaleidoscope of beauty, re-enter the Earth's soul.

Now, newly, enriched like a child's first knowledge of love and hate, sprouts a sapling longing to reach the endless sky. Within these walls, we can only accomplish our dreams by setting goals within ourselves.

-Smelly Mel, San Mateo

From The Beat: That piece flowed beautifully until the ending when you hit us hard with that last line. Which, by the way, is one of the realest things we've heard in a while. So what goals have you set within yourself? Do you foresee anything being a road block to these goals? What are they? What can you do to get around them? Thanks again for such a well-written piece.

**Now, newly, enriched like a child's
first knowledge of love and hate,
sprouts a sapling longing
to reach the endless sky.**

Nightlife

The girl goes outside
And looks up as the stars
She starts walking down the block
Then jumps in random guys' cars
Later she smokes a blunt
To relieve her of her strife
But that's how it goes
This is the nightlife

A young man walks outside
He thinks about how he has no hope
He starts walking down the block
And begins selling dope
He feels no love
But wants a wife
But that's now it goes
This is the nightlife

The girl is now done smoking
And stumbles out of the car
The girl is now hoping
To find the closest bar
Every night she's with a new man
Even though she's a different man's wife
But none of this matters
This is the nightlife

The boy for the night has finished
slanging
He's all thugged-out
And he's tired of bangin'
He's so full of sorrow
Tonight his body will be hangin'
But his soul will be free
He's no longer a prisoner
Of his own captivity
His mind no longer feels
All of this grief and strife
But none of this matters
This is the nightlife

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is an incredible story-as-poem, and it reminds us of singers such as Bruce Springsteen who have sung tales illuminating the dark corners of tragic lives being led in our hometowns. The rhythm of your words, and the repetition of "this is the nightlife," gives the piece a performance quality — it seems as if it's a piece written to be read out loud. What words do you have for the girl who searches for love with a new man every night? How would you console the young man who seeks freedom from a world of pain?



Tha Hustle And Run-On

The hustle breaks down to a very intricate and complicating meaning, to conjure as much currency as possible by any means necessary. The hustle is often knocked by those who easily can make enough to survive, not knowing, or knowing, but not willing to realize that not everyone is as adept to being able to work a job. And, to the troubled youth that ain't able to make it through school, but still need to survive, what are the other options? Who is left to decide the fate of them, but the ones who could honestly care less?

Careless, also a wide range of meanings. One of which that causes most unloved youth to reside in the depths of solitude only accepting love from himself for no one has ever showed it to him.

Showing... a major asset needed to make it through life. For we all need help in one way or another, but what about that one child with no father to show him, and a mother strung-out on drugs so she can't show him. He who is left to watch the kids, maintain the household, and at the same time, hustle for money to survive. But that child must be very cautious for the hustle is knocked.

-O-Dog, San Mateo

From The Beat: We already know you have book knowledge and street knowledge by reading your piece, but we're wondering how somebody so aware of what's going on could end up where you are. Does knowing these things change the way you think — or act? If not, why? If so, explain how someone can know something to the fullest, write about it with such brilliance, and still fall victim to it as if it was never a thought in his mind — or, as if there are literally no other options. Is that what you really believe?

I didn't know I was pregnant till I was in the ER, and they told me I was having a miscarriage from stress.

Bare Naked

I see myself bare-naked in my dreams. Why? Just because my whole life has been ruined. When I was little, my life was like a dream. When I was five years old, I had gotten high off of bud through contact. It was three months before my sixteenth birthday when I learned how to get high. My dad was never there; he was always locked up.

I feel so alone, so sad and lonely. When I was eight years old, I started on sherm. As I grew up, every year I got harder into drugs. My mom was never able to control me. I would always run away.

When I was twelve, my virginity was taken away at a party; I was stripped down naked, real bruised up from head to toe. I had gotten raped by my ex and was always getting beat up by him just because if I didn't clean, or cook, or did anything he wanted me to do. I had got tired of it so I left him.

Yeah, I was scared, but then I got back into drugs. I started to always stay in the streets helping my brother-in-law make his money. I never told anyone, but I had been pregnant twice. The first one was from the guy who had taken my virginity; me, my nana, and her boyfriend are the only ones who knew about both.

My mom was locked up for the first one. She does not know about either one of them till this day. I didn't know I was pregnant till I was in the ER, and they told me I was having a miscarriage from stress. My grandma promised me she wouldn't tell a soul and she has kept it ever since, so now I'm in here and I want to get out, I want to change my life because I feel stripped down, head to toe, from the fast life that I grew up in. And I pray to God, day and night, to forgive me for I know I have sinned.

-Sasha, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: You know there's this one woman that had gone through so much that she wanted to commit suicide. She was on the edge of ending her life until she saw this painting. This painting was a painting of a garden with beautiful flowers and plants. Looking at that painting gave her this warm feeling inside, so she didn't end her life. You know what she did? She decided to make a garden of her own with flowers and all kinds of beautiful plants. She said that she's going to surround herself with beautiful things. Not things that bring her down and make her feel ugly inside, and she gives God all the praise. We're not trying to tell you to go and make a garden, but do what she did, surround yourself with beautiful things so that you won't feel like you feel now. We feel for you and have much love for you, Sasha. We're here for you. God still loves you regardless of your sins, and he doesn't ignore the fact that you're going through pain. It's your decision to make that turn or stay on that same lane. Are you going to make that turn?

I Love Freedom

I love it when I was a little child
 Having no responsibilities and always running wild.
 I love it when I played with my Nintendo
 Passing every level with Mario.
 I love it when I got my first kiss
 Remembering all the times I got dissed.
 I love it when I play football
 Running people over and determined not to fall.
 I love it when I'm out on that field
 Going all out every down as if it was my last meal.
 I love it when I go fishing with my dad
 Seeing the smile on his face made me glad.
 I love it when I make moms proud
 Knowing that she loves me more than most crowds.
 I love it when I'm with my girl
 The woman that is my world.
 I love it when we touch lips
 Being lost in her curves and slender hips.
 I love it when it's just the two of us
 Having fun without any fuss.
 I love it when I pray to the Lord
 Forgiving me of my sins forever more.
 I love it when He shows me the light
 Bringing me out of the depression from the night.

-Alfred M., San Mateo

From The Beat: Oh, Alfred, what a poem! In these few words, you have managed to assemble a universe of images that all spell freedom, as if you were pointing a movie camera at those things in life that make it all worth it. To be able to write any poem in the time you're given is remarkable by itself, but to write a poem as full as this one leaves us in awe. We love this poem.

A Piece Of Mind

Only God can judge me
 The rest can forget me
 I grew-up in a world of haters and phony homies
 My own family played me
 And my girl had another fool's baby
 The world is shady
 Suicide was on my mind
 Then I realized
 These are problems that I must ride
 So I put the gun aside and
 Hold back the tears in my eyes
 I walk around the Hall with a smile on my face
 But when I'm in my cell that when pain takes place
 Wish my heart will stop it's place
 I am only seventeen
 But seen more things that an old man couldn't even dream
 Screw homies, girls, and money
 It's the joy of love I need.
 This ain't a rap, rhyme or poem if you wonder
 Just another story of another lost minor.

-Young Man, San Mateo

From The Beat: Based on what you've written, we think you're anything but lost. Sad, yes; confused, possibly; but no one who is able to reflect on the past with such insight can be considered lost. What will it take for you to find yourself? How can you continue to deal with the pain you feel, riding out the problems that must be ridden, confronting those which will continue to bring you down until you face them? Where, and from whom, do you think you can find the joy of love? What are these things that you've seen? Maybe getting them out on paper will be the first step towards finding a lasting smile, one that doesn't mask pain but instead reveals joy.

**I trembled
 before you
 as you took
 her away.
 And I
 screamed
 for her
 back that
 same day.**

Dear God

Dear God, holding my grandma tight.
 Remember I love her and I cry myself to sleep at night.
 Remember please who you took her from.
 And remind me that we'll be together again when my time here is done.
 Will you please watch over her as she sleeps, as I would?
 If only I had been given a chance, if only I could see her now. I wish so hard — more than you could ever know.
 I trembled before you as you took her away.
 And I screamed for her back that same day.
 God, you took what I longed for without a thought of me.
 I've been mad and sad and now I want to know – will I ever be truly happy?
 Dear God, take care of my grandma. Tell her of my love
 As she gets to jump on all the clouds above.
 Don't let her doubt or ever forget
 My love for her that she always met.
 Will you hold her now as I would want to?
 So I expect this out of you.
 Do this for her. Do this for me.
 Please do this for all of my family.
 RIP, grandma.
 I miss her.

-Esequiel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We are touched by the love you have for your grandma. Grannies are special people; some of us have been lucky enough to meet our grannies. What are some of the special moments that the two of you shared together? Do you remember how she smelled? How it felt to be in her arms? Do you remember how granny always seemed to make each day special? How are you dealing with the pain? Remember, your grandmother only left you physically — she is still with you spiritually. Now, her new home is in your heart.

Product of My Community

for once in my life i wish i would have done things legit
instead of doing time for the crimes i commit
i know i'm payin' dues which i owe my community
but damn i'm a product of my community
so why am i payin' for what these rich folks did to me
instead of buildin' a park they hire more police to harass me
s s f p d can buy new impalas but can't update the library
claim they need them 'cause my lil' city's scary
well it wouldn't be give youngstas something to do
ninjas started to ride mini-bikes police tryin' to take that too
none of these rec' centers ain't new lookin' all old an' rusty
can't remember them paintin' it since i was a young gee
way back before my name was smokey
i laugh when i think 'bout it
they say clean up the 'hood but do nothing 'bout it
they want a boy to grow to be a man
okay then where thei' helpin' hand
'cause most of us ain't got no fathers
the few we have get locked up for stackin' illegal dollars
how y'all expect them to feed us when there ain't no job offers
so can someone please tell me how they expect me to be
livin' where resources are limited struggle's a everyday thing
growin' up in South San Francisco
i'm just a product of my community

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your indictment of our society's priorities is powerful and sharp as a razor's edge, but a double-edged razor that cuts both ways; 'cause given everything you say, you still can't let it be your excuse to fail. As a product of your community, with your intelligence and ability, you could be a streetwise visionary poet: Tell the truth as you know it, put it in words and show it! Put down the gun and pick up a pencil, dispel ignorance that gets used as a reprehensible screen for the meaner than mean realities you've seen. A poem speeds farther than a bullet, its trigger is the human heart — pull it, and change starts.

The Mother I Never Had

Last week I was in YGC. I wrote to The Beat about the system.

Well, today I am in Alameda. Now I want to write about not having a mother. I don't know how it feels to go home after school and give my mother a hug. I went home to abuse.

My father was a drug addict and he abused me in every way I could think of. I really had a messed up childhood and scars I will have for life.

I grew up with five brothers and one sister. My sister moved out when I was ten, then I was left with my crack-head father and my five older brothers.

When my dad would do drugs he would wake me up and beat me in the worst way I can think of. I really blame my mother for leaving me in that hotel room when I was two weeks old, not calling me on any of my birthdays, not hugging me when I was being abused.

I wish my mother was here. I wish I could see her here. I wish she could love me the way I loved her. She is just not here.

She has two other kids that she has always been there for. Why was she not here for me? I still ask the same questions every day.

-Angelica, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Angelica, in life we all have experiences that we cannot explain. It hurts. But, do you think that there is any reason or excuse she could give you that would be acceptable? Instead of focusing on this question, focus on yourself. Who are you? What kind of person are you? What kind of person do you want to be? You may have scars that are going to last your lifetime. But, hopefully you can walk away with a valuable lesson too, and as a teacher to help others. You can be that caring, loving, hugging person for someone that you care about, the person that you wish you had. Thanks for writing and reading your powerful piece to the group too.

Thoughts

really i ain't got no friends
but got hella acquaintances
when my anger start to show
there ain't no tamin' this
out of all my p-o's kids
i must be the mainiest
ain't proud of things
but ain't no shame in it
especially when i come to this life of horror
take a trip into my mind an' i'll give you a tour
'bout to speak on some things i go through
some situations are guaranteed to speak to you
most of them in regards to retaliations
but these parts of my life
back in the first bush administration
wit' moms steady pacin'
goin' back an' forth to court
been tryin' for years
to get pops for child support
none of which he ever paid
moms sayin' —
ya better be a good father one day
always respondin' — i will be
— but i musta lied
can't support my baby on the way
an' i'm dyin' inside
but back to my younger years
back when i still knew how to shed tears
back then shhh was not as hectic
but yet i was raised mighty reckless
at age seven i found an' held my first pistol
playfully holdin' it at my lil' cous's head
not knowin' it could've exploded
luckily the nine millimeter wasn't loaded
these are just a few of my thoughts right now

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's like you let the door to your life swing open just a bit, so we peek in to see all of this danger and pain in it. No father there to care for you, or even send money to share with you — and now you're locked up and afraid you'll do the same to the child on the way to you. It's true that if you're born into a life of violence, abandonment and confusion — it's hard to turn it around and stop losing. But now it's for your child that you're choosing, too. So don't just repeat what happened to you.

**I wish my
mother was
here. I wish I
could see her
here I wish
she could love
me the way I
loved her.**

NOT FOR LONG

Derby and demolition
 Life as a politician
 Elections ya' neva winnin'
 Laws they always bendin'
 What more can I be in this system?
 Will they ever listen?
 Young and needy
 Or the old and greedy
 Infested by the terror of life
 We know what's right
 They treat us wrong
 Instead we fight each other
 Unite and we can blow the cover off government once and for all
 United we shall not fall
 Politics we hate it
 Without them we won't make it
 It's forsaken that we run our lives
 We got power to change but we refuse to use it
 But choose to be abused by the laws we facin'
 We in a desperate situation
 We need to take action
 Politicians smack us in the face then we askin' '
 What happen?
 Now they clownin' us
 'Cause we dumb
 We read about our black leaders but never follow they' step
 These things we regret
 In these days come to past
 Then our future will be over
 We need a movement now or never
 The governments clever
 But we're slicker than ever
 Tomorrow's a new day
 And do it the right way
 Politicians we need them
 Some laws we don't
 Government sucks and sometimes it don't
 I declare war and it's time to go
 Politicians we need them
 Some laws we don't
 Government sucks and sometimes it don't
 I declare war and it's time to go
 To live free is to have justice in our life
 Crime and war it ain't even right
 It's like at night they take our souls
 Death has come for us
 We out sayin' go run Forrest
 I'm a Taurus
 So I'm hard headed
 Listening to these politics I still don't get
 I regret my situation now or ever
 Time is now to unite together
 Whether we sustained the weather
 I'm really clever
 Understand that our minds are really strong
 You may own this nation
 But not for long.

-Lil Jepeabo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! Great piece of writing, we are in awe. Very creative piece! Government does suck, and sometimes it doesn't. You call it like it is! How do you think our government got to this point? How can we, as the people of this country make change? You're declaring war, where is it time to go? Tell us more. How do you plan to win? How can we make this world a better one? Count us in. Let's work together!

Time To Fight Back!

Winnin' an election
 Is just another selection
 Of power
 Some hide behind others
 'Cause they're nothing but cowards
 Democrat or Republican, either or
 Everything still goes sour.
 They hold us down like slaves
 Throwin' unjust laws in our face
 Thinking one day they can replace
 Our fate
 But to not vote
 We forsakin' our own destiny
 I hate to live in a world of corruption
 We can't fix our own country
 How can we declare another?
 This bothers me
 Because we are the ones who suffer
 If our country believes in peace
 When will the government deasease?
 The killin' in the streets
 For what it's worth
 The government sucks
 Until we get a real president who works for us
 There will be no peace
 And it won't be worth the fuss.
 To die today is to live free tomorrow
 Emotions and sorrow fills our thoughts
 Not to fight back just add another loss
 I'm tired of losin' and being abused by this
 government
 Laws and the flaws within
 Our own states
 My regrets is just living here
 Another day.
 I can't take no more!
 Time to fight back!

-Lil Jepeabo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Fight Back! You're a smart guy and we can feel your frustration. This can be a good combination. Just focus your frustration, and do something positive. Your writing is a great start. Very inspirational! Help others, teach others, support one another with exercising, reading and writing. Start today in the unit! And take it to the streets!

**Democrat or
 Republican, either or
 Everything still
 goes sour.
 They hold us down
 like slaves
 Throwin' unjust laws
 in our face**

Road Trips

Lying naked, sprawled over crumpled sheets
 As if love were a cargo truck
 And sex-allied enthalpy, clouding minds, and drifting carelessly
 over flesh, paved roads
 Time and time again, left cripple miles from help
 Broken down and left for dead
 I find refuge in a Christian girl who drives by with helping hands
 She ties two straps, but won't take them off when we get home
 Like shreds of a severed heart, she grips tight in holy hands
 She won't let go
 I never asked her into my life
 And who'd have guessed my love was for a schoolgirl
 With braids, and dreams of a family
 With Sunday school, and Bible studies
 I didn't ask for shhh, so untie me
 Get out of my life, out of my bed,
 and back under that stack of Bibles
 Jesus freak, forget you false preachers
 And with that, we tear ties over turkey sandwiches and cold soda
 Back on the road, crushed from past loves,
 Overwhelmed by new beauty,
 and we take shots with the "good girls"
 They take the wheel with the puckered lips and puppy eyes
 They lead you to breathtaking mountains of fresh-fallen snow
 Then, just as fast,
 send you skidding reckless into this so-called love
 Forget all of you friendly virgins
 We try the rebellious type who stay out late
 They trick all the boys, and get in more trouble than you
 They hide weakness under truckloads of makeup and tight pants
 They lead you through city streets,
 past cheap hotels, and flashy theaters
 You stop at parks and pound them into dirt and Earth
 And then at your weakest moment, they attack
 Distracting your nerves, they reach in your pockets
 They bite your heart, taking pieces then crush, chew, and twist
 Then spit across the town for others to manipulate
 Forget all those uptown cleptos
 I take these roads everyday
 Through dark tunnels and past, fancy street signs
 Past fields and over hills, they all lead to pain
 So until I get the right directions
 There are no more road trips for me.

-Clepto, San Mateo

From The Beat: Once again you've outdone yourself — at least in our eyes — which is why we think you're a freakin' genius. How the hell can you piece words together as if they were pieces of the simplest jigsaw puzzle in the world? Well, however you do it, we're astonished when those pieces come together and paint a magnificent picture, as they always do in your poems. How did you come with the idea to compare your experiences with women to going on a road trip? Come to think of it, it doesn't matter how you came up with the idea, you made it your own. That's why we can't wait for you to drop another one on us.

**They hide weakness
 under truckloads
 of makeup
 and tight pants**



Apologize to The Victim

If I had the chance to meet the victim of my crime, I would jump at the chance. I would want to have a chance to apologize to him. Even if he doesn't accept it, I would feel better by trying.

I feel a lot of remorse towards my victim. I think I have changed my victim's life totally, and I regret the day I changed his life. He is probably going through a lot of hardship that I've caused him. He is also probably aware of his surroundings and is more careful now — but he might even be traumatized, all because of my stupid mistake.

I don't feel angry at my victim, but I feel angry at myself for not knowing better! My victim is a total stranger, but I imagine that he is probably angry at me — and I don't blame him. If we met, he'd probably cuss me out!

I don't know if my victim and his family still hold resentment towards me, probably they do. But it's possible they've forgiven me. I hope they forgave me. I hope if I ever had the chance to meet with my victim, that I could get his forgiveness and that he would accept my apology.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We appreciate your seriousness, your insight and your remorse on our topic. We especially respect your wisdom in realizing that you would be the beneficiary of making a heart-felt apology, whether or not your victim forgave you. In some spiritual traditions, before asking the forgiveness of God, you must first ask the forgiveness of the victim. This is for your spiritual healing. In a sense you've begun that process in this piece. It doesn't end with an apology, however — it begins. Now you must live a life of making amends, if not directly to your victim, then indirectly through the influence of your thoughts and actions on a world of potential victims and victimizers. Again, you've already begun making amends, with your writing for The Beat Within!

Friskie's Page**Taking A Stand**

I feel like people need to start taking a stand. Every day I see people running others down. Why are people so insecure? Why do people cower down when really it's time to take a stand? Stand up for yourself, your beliefs — whatever it is, don't ever back down unless you are in the wrong. But if you know in your heart you're right, stand tall — don't ever allow yourself to be taken for granted or let someone try to manipulate you to change your mind or ideas just to conform with theirs or the opinions of others. Don't allow anyone to talk down to you; you are perfect as you are.

I know for me personally, my behavior needs to be modified slightly because it brought me here, but myself as a person, and my opinions and beliefs, did not. Stay true to yourself 'cause if you don't, you'll get lost and others will mislead you. Don't be fake; stay true to yourself.

It's taken me almost 15 years to figure this out. I always used to march to the beat of the person next to my drum. But now I'm following the melody of my own heart. It's time we all rise up and take a stand.

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: Wow — we couldn't agree with the conclusions you've come to more. We're not sure anyone's perfect as they are, but everybody has the ability to strive towards perfection within themselves. How did you manage to come to the realization that it was time to start marching to your own drummer? How are you finding the melody of your own heart? What did it take to break with those who had you in step behind them? How will you be able to continue to distinguish your rhythm from theirs? We look forward to the tune you spin.

The Victim

The victim is cold-hearted
No emotion whatsoever
Always hurting others
Never feels remorse, never.
All these things
The eye can plainly see
But none of this matters
As long as they don't know that my victim is me.
The victim has been hurt
Which is why she doesn't feel
Everyone talks down to her
And makes her feel as though she's not real.
The victim's eyes
You can see right through
They are so filled with hate
But that is nothing new.
The victim is lonely
And her mind is full of waste
The victim's heart is bleeding
And she needs to get out of this horrible place.
I wonder if people are able to see
That my victim is none other than me.

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: The pain in this piece is searing — there is no escaping the feeling that we need to comfort you, to tell you everything will be okay even if it won't. Who or what is victimizing you? Is there a way to leave the situation that has turned you into a victim? There are hints in this piece that you are the person victimizing yourself — you say that "my victim is me." Why do you do the things you do to yourself? How can you begin to heal two sides of you, the sides that are playing the opposing roles of perpetrator and victim? Do you think that once you leave "this horrible place" you'll be able to stop victimizing yourself, or is there something deeper you need to confront and begin to cope with?

**Our writing
keeps us
together
Even
though
these
institutions
keep us
apart.**

Dear Self Esteem

Self esteem your poems are truly deep
Your pieces are beautiful
They are of the few I shall always keep.
Can I get an understanding?
Started to make me cry
Why can't all guys be like you?
Please tell me why.
Your writing is truly touching
It made me start to open my eyes
You said "Somebody tell me something"
Well, your mighty flow calmed down my cries
And I know all you ladies can feel me
Because this piece holds no lies.
Everyone pick up the pencil
And write what's on your heart
Our writing keeps us together
Even though these institutions keep us apart.

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: There is a challenge in reading this piece that makes us smile — are you writing to a writer named "Self Esteem," or is this a piece you've written to yourself? Either way, there's depth and beauty in your lines, and the recognition of the powers of writing and community warms our heart. The final few lines sound like a tag line we could adopt for The Beat — thanks for the indirect props. How will you continue to seek an understanding through your writing? How can you continue to challenge yourself as a writer and as a person as you put pencil to paper?



Victims In My Life

There are several victims in my life. But first, let me talk about the person I hurt to be locked up right now.

If I had a chance to talk to the victim and his family, I would first start by saying that I am really, truly sorry for putting them through all the hurt and pain I put their family through, even though they probably wouldn't want to hear what I would have to say.

But I would tell them that what had happened was a complete accident, that I never intentionally meant to hurt anybody — and that I'm really remorseful for what I have done. So, basically, I would want the victims to know that I am really sorry, that I never meant to cause so much pain to their family.

The other victims in my life right now are my own family members, because they have to come see me locked up; and especially my future wife and our daughter — because I'm not able to be out taking care of them.

Well, it's about that time to end this letter. So, until next time, I love you, Maressa and Gabriella.

-Matt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel the sincerity of your remorse in every word you put on the page. And maybe you're not ready yet to imagine what your victim's family might say to you. Yet, it would be worth trying, when you're ready, because, believe it or not, it will help you in your process of grieving, accepting responsibility, and beginning to (1) forgive yourself and (2) make amends, direct or indirect. Just writing this piece as honestly as you do, and sharing it with our readers, is making indirect amends.

My Desperate Moment

When I first came in I wanted another hit of something. I really did not care what it was. I was too weak to get out of my bed. My hands were shaky and drugs were the only thing on my mind. I had a problem following the rules and reading.

But as my time went by, I did not have those problems. I was counting the bricks on my walls and every day that passed I felt one day closer to getting high. Every time I thought about it, I got an impatient feeling and time would go by slow. When I tried not to think about it, I would read and I started to think clear.

All my thoughts that I had to get high when I get out went away.

I try to listen to what staff says. I stay quiet most of the time and I hope when I get out I can overcome my drug addiction.

-Courage, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Courage, what an appropriate name. Life is filled with many ups and downs, and addiction is a huge monster to fight, but as you've seen already, by taking it one step at a time, you've been able to free your mind bit by bit. Will you be sent to rehab? It sounds like you now have the desire to change, and that's huge. Remember, you are not measured by how you react when times are good. The true measure of a man is how one acts when times are bad. How you react to adversity will almost always determine your position in life. Stay strong! Look around! See what situations drugs cause people to find themselves in, and think about what drove you to give your life over to drugs. Self-knowledge is power.

We Are The Victims

First and foremost, the victims in the situation that got me incarcerated right now — are me and my homie Danny Boy! We had got shot at by somebody I never met, seen nor talked to.

But if you want to call him the victim, you can. Right now, that person is either at home kicking it, or is still riding around the streets. He caused the crime and got away. But it's okay.

That person's life hasn't changed one bit. If anything, I bet he's thinking he's tougher or harder because he got away! I'm a little angry towards him, because he committed the crime — but I'm paying for it!

Since I don't know who he is though, I cannot do nothing about it. I'm thinking he's the rival of the other person I was with, and that's why he did what he did. I wouldn't want to meet him ever! Not that I hate him — it's just because he did what he did.

-Dario, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We agree with you that a lot of folks get further entrenched in a lifestyle of gunplay and violence, every time they tell themselves they got away with it. Of course you're angry at him! And maybe it's a good thing you don't know who he is. Would you seek vengeance, or have friends seek vengeance? The real problem is acting on that impulse. It's probably what motivated your victim/victimizer, too. But our advice to you is to take the spotlight off him, and try to see the part you play in what happens to you. Then ask yourself, what can you change?

A Haunting Memory Of Abuse

Yeah, what's up Beat? How's everything going? As you know it's In It To Win It back at you again, you feel me?

But now I just want to talk about when me and my siblings was young. Some strangers molested me, my brother, my two sisters, and my cousin. I don't know why, but they did. My mom was on dope at the time. My dad was out there pimpin', selling drugs, and probably on drugs.

All I know is they were never there for my siblings when we were young. So we all went into foster care. Me and my brother went to foster homes and to group homes 'cause we stayed running from them. Feel me?

But the moral of this story is I went from all that to selling dope, not trusting nobody, to really being on my own throughout my teenage years. Feel me Beat? I'm out!

(To be continued...)

-In It To Win It B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is such a difficult topic for boys to talk about, IITWI, we give you major props for talking about it. We're sorry it happened to you, and we wonder if you've ever talked about it with a counselor, psychologist, or with anybody. How old were you when this happened? Was it ongoing, or a single event? How have your siblings and cousin dealt with it? How have you? Why do you think adults prey on children? Do you think they were preyed on when they were children? What suggestions do you have for other children who have experienced what you have experienced?



Dear Beat Within Editors And/Or Readers:

I have a problem. My father is trying to get back into my life. Him and I had gotten into a fight a few years ago, because he was with a redhead on X-mas and New Year's Eve and day, now I hadn't seen my father in two years at that time, and before that like 6 years, and before that when I was 6 he left me and my sister.

I knocked out my father for not being there X-mas and New Year's and told him I never wanted to see him again. Now my father is trying to start a relationship with me. Should I give him another chance? Should I say forget it and live my life like I have?

I need to know 'cause it's driving me crazy, he keeps sending me letters! I'm afraid that if I see him again it's going to be round two. I'm afraid that he's going to let my sister down again, but there is no way he can let me down again. I won't let him.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't know exactly what you should do, but here's a suggestion: Give him a second chance and lay down the law — tell him that you are willing to give him one more chance but he has to promise that he will no longer break your heart. If he does again — then shake him for good. Or you could just follow your heart 'cause we can see that you have a big space for him in your heart.

I Am Blessed

I am blessed
to have faith in God
I am blessed
to have a mom
I am blessed
to have my luck advanced
I am blessed
to be given a second chance
I am blessed
to believe what I believe
I am blessed
that I will be able to leave
I am blessed
for all that God has done
I am blessed
to go home to my son
I am blessed
for all these things
I am blessed
for God giving me these things.

-Choppa, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Another powerful rhyme. Seems like you now know how to cherish what you have. And that, too, is a blessing.

Runnin' The Streets

When I was out runnin' the streets
I thought my freedom couldn't be taken away from me.
I thought I would be independent and out with my friends.
Then one day it all came to an end,
I woke up with a cop looking at me right in my eyes.
At that point, to freedom I must say goodbye.
I left in cuffs with tears streaming down my cheeks.
Little did I know I would be in Juvenile Hall for weeks.
I looked to my sister and I felt my tears,
Then when reality hit me, I could feel all the fears.
Now as I sit here to write this poem,
I realize how much I miss my mom.
I shed a tear for her night and day,
And now I realize I don't want to live this way.
I may be sad; I may be confused,
But I'm scared of court and the news.
I fear of more time in this place
And now I'll have a nervous look on my face.
I'm scared for my life and everyone around,
I'm scared of how many of my tears hit the ground.
What if my mom disowns me, and I can never
Hug her ever again, and so they send me away forever and ever?
I have been stripped of my freedom, family, and friends,
When I was told the verdict my life did end.
I was scared and I'm still scared, but I'm getting better
Even though from my family I didn't receive one letter.
I am not happy; I am not free,
I am very sorry, I apologize, can't you see?
Give me my freedom back and I'll do what I should.
Please don't strip me of my freedom and I'll be good.

-Melissa, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: This an incredibly touching and well written poem. You explained what everybody who's incarcerated has been through by saying "when I was runnin' the streets, I never thought my freedom could be taken from me." However, we still can't explain why those who know their freedom could be taken still insist on taking part in illegal activities. Can you explain it? How does knowing you can have your freedom taken away change things for you?

The Day My Heart Left

The day my heart left,
When I was six,
My heart broke in pieces,
My little brothers pick up each piece,
I don't trust no one else,
Not even my own family,
I don't have feelings for no one,
Not even for myself,
I tried to make my life a better place,
But it didn't work,
So I look to my homies,
And start to gangbang like the rest,
The only way out is to ride and die,
"To My Heart,"
Let her rest in peace,
I love you, and miss you very much,
Once again I said, "RIP Juanita," my mama.

-Perico, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Not only do you still have heart, but also you have soul, Perico, as these incredibly powerful verses show. Other people read this and feel where you're coming from, and that's what great art is about. But do you really believe that Ride and Die is the only way to go — is that what your mother wanted for you? Is that what you want for your little brothers? We think there's more out there for you. The question is, how? Keep pushing the pencil, and keep challenging yourself to think!

**I don't have feelings for no one,
Not even for myself**

My Victim

I don't give a shhh about my victims. My victims were rich Caucasians 'bout my age. Check it out, them suckas got brand new cars when they hit sixteen. Shhh, I ain't even got a car, but when I get one it sho' ain't fit to be brand new, that shhh still gone be stuntin' tho, but that's not tha point. The point is the rich, selfish white kids ain't got no worries in the world. They got money from their mommies and daddies fo' whatever they want. They want to go to college — it's a done deal.

These people to me are straight suckas. They gone cry and call the police on me because they lost some pocket change. You know damn well they ain't hurtin'. You can call it a Robin Hood act. Stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. You see them suckas so spoiled — they literally spoiled rotten. They don't have no sympathy for us and when I mean us, I'm talking but people who have everyday problems with bills, food, clothes and a whole lot of shhh.

What needs to happen? Send them white boys to at least a poor neighborhood, strip them of the' personals except one set of clothes. Have them getting the' own food and clothes without credit cards and shhh. And last — don't let them get money from their parents. After awhile they will see their mistakes and if they don't, screw 'em.

-Big Samoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Big Samoa, you have some fatalistic ideas right thurr! There seems to be something you don't understand though — the world don't owe you shhh! Those rich white people don't even owe you the time of day. They probably feel the same way you feel about them but on another scale like daam he a hater! You've got to stop looking at what the next person has and get yo' own shhh. Like Too Short says in his song "Gettin' It" — "Quit complainin' 'bout how you can't spend it 'cause you ain't got it." If people stop worrying about the next man and start focusing on themselves then we all would all be better equipped to live peacefully and productively. We do feel what you're saying though about people who don't seem to understand that not everyone's as lucky as them — just don't let your anger ruin you, too.

My Family Are My Victims

I've caused my family so much pain,
I feel so guilty it's driving me insane.

When my family were having hard times or were feeling down,
I was always with my homies, I was never around.

When they told me not to go out I did it anyways
Now I'm locked up and I'm missing them everyday
I'm in here feeling mad and fighting this depression

Facing another day under incarceration

Everyday I ask myself is there a good reason why

I hurt my family like this and let them slip by

My family is losing hope in me and I feel it in my heart

I don't know why this judge likes keeping us apart

I messed up so I'm the one to blame

That's what I get for playing this ruffian game

I miss walking outside and enjoying the breezes

I'ma make my family proud, that's my promise to Jesus

I'm gonna change my life I have it in my soul

To be with my family is my ultimate goal

-Smiley, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice goal! You're asking yourself this question "why?" everyday, and still no answer. It's time to realize there is no answer important enough to condone your behavior. So change it! Hard-hitting writing, by the way!

**I'm gonna change my life
I have it in my soul
To be with my family
is my ultimate goal**

Knowledge For You All

in this game ya got to be ruthless
or ya gonna get blasted

strapless in the wrong 'hood

could end ya up in a casket

if ya playin' this life as a joy-ride

hope ya seatbelt fastened

'cause wit' one bullet to ya head

and ya life's over that's it

no more thizzed-out or

try to sleep wit' that female at a party

no more runnin' out of safeway

wit' them stolen bottles of bacardi

come down to it have ya potna

tellin' ya moms he is so sorry

'bout the way south city p d

found ya mangled body

'cause ya messed wit' the wrong ninjas

and he hit ya up wit' the shotty

moms plannin' ya funeral

while ya at the coroner rottin'

got to know the in's an' out's of this game

and the repercussions

'cause unprepared ninjas get sick

need some robitussin

off of some of the dirt that they seein'

this game wasn't designed

for the average human bein'

if you think ya equipped

'cause ya supposedly kick it

wit' a team

of some hard hittin' ninjas

voted to be mean

well do what ya do homie

see what i mean

it will change ya life forever

i been there done that

in a way it's made me clever

believe it or not

bein' smart is a treasure

and something that ya got to cherish

like when ya love a girl

and ya propose to her marriage

off topic lil' homies

just want to drop y'all some knowledge

try to keep ya away

from that ghetto college

all i got was a b-a

in hard life one-oh-one

on a real level

where ya live an' die by the gun

it not what ya see in the movies

it ain't all that fun

an' just 'cause ya laid out on the concrete

don't think the drama is done

think 'bout ya potnas and ya family

the aftermath to come

in the 'hood retaliation's a must

an' the drama just begun

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: To us, your poem starts out on the wrong foot, but from there on out it's all good; better than good, required reading for the little homies growing up in the 'hood! But that first part about strapped and ruthless — get ruthless with yourself; don't chase foolish fantasies of illicit wealth; it'll take your mental health, leave you leaking in the street or locked in a cell dreaming 'bout years of hell on earth which the judge calls your just desserts. As you so aptly put it, Young Smoke, the aftermath's still to come for your family, friends, and folks. Get ruthless about changing your life, before your loved ones have to pay your price. 'Cause no one's clever enough to succeed for long, in a game designed to bleed the weak and kill the strong.

Smokey's Page

Who?

Who is the real victim?
 Them or me?
 Who has to be watched
 When they have to pee?
 Who is the one
 Who's been through it all?
 Who is the one
 Whose life is beginning to fall?
 Who is the one
 Who's been abused as a kid?
 Who is the one
 Who was taught to be timid?
 Who is the one
 Who lives on the streets?
 Who is the one
 Whose clothes are their bed sheets?
 Now, who's the one
 Who's in Juvenile Hall?
 Who's the one
 With withdrawal from alcohol?
 Who is the one
 Whose mom left them?
 Whose the one
 Whose childhood was in a den?
 Who's the real victim?
 Them or me?
 Who is the one
 Whose going to die on the street?
 It's going to be them or me?

-Smokey, San Mateo

From The Beat: You are very right — everybody's a victim in this cruel world, some more than others. However, it's one thing to look at ourselves as victims, but another to make ourselves aware of who we've victimized. Otherwise, we're just being selfish and closed-minded. Who have you hurt in your life? Is it a cycle that has no end — you're victimized by people who were themselves victims, and then you victimize in turn? How does it feel to look back on it now, and see it as though you were an outsider? Who do you think deserves more — you or your victim? What do you (and they) deserve?

That Person

I hate this person
 When I see him
 He acts like a mutt
 When I see him
 He thinks he's hard
 His heart is charred
 From pain
 He's insane
 I still hate him
 But I can't blame him
 For he's been through a lot
 Since he was a tot
 His dad left
 His brother is deaf
 His mom's crazy
 His sister's lazy
 Now he wants to die,
 Yet he can't cry
 He doesn't know when
 He will end,
 But he hopes it's soon
 So he can visit the moon
 I would help
 When I hear him yelp,
 But the only way I can help him
 Is if I kill him,
 But if I kill him,
 I'll be killing myself.

-Smokey, San Mateo

From The Beat: Another sad poem. But when you write sad poems, we can't help but be astonished by the skills you possess. How often do you think about suicide? Does writing about suicide all the time frighten you? Have you done anything to try to get over this feeling? If not, why? If so, what have you done?

Desperate

Desperate to be free
 Desperate to be me
 Desperate to fit in
 Desperate not to sin
 Desperate to feel
 Desperate to heal
 Desperate to die
 Desperate to cry
 Desperate to try
 Desperate to lie
 Desperate to find something in all of this
 Desperate for one last kiss
 Desperate to say good-bye
 So I can lay down and die.

-Smokey, San Mateo

From The Beat: It's hard to respond to this piece because although you repeat the word 'desperate,' your piece still says so much in every line. It says that you are an extremely desperate person. The dictionary definition of desperate is overwhelmed with urgency and anxiety, to the point of losing hope. Have you lost all hope? How can we help you regain some of that? We see such potential for you. Why don't you see it?



*Behind These Walls*

Behind these walls
Sittin' and spittin'
My life stories been writin'
Locked down is what I'm getting
A chance of lights never been hidin'
Steady stressing askin' God for a blessin'
I'm guessin'
It's never a lesson
In this session
I'm speakin'
You blinkin'
You might miss somethin'
Then your brains be leakin'
I'm never sleepin'
'Cause there's no peace
In these streets
I'm lookin' inside out
Tryin' to get back out
And if your lockout
Stay out

Behind these walls
I'm never gone fall
Lookin' to the light
'Till the day I ball
Behind these walls
I never gone fall

When light fails and dark prevails
It never sells livin' in this freakin' county hell
Stuck behind these walls so I can't tell
I'm not livin' this life no more
Tardy in this game
Retire
Tearin' down these walls like an empire
Dyin' in this hellhole
Behind these walls man I feel like a John Doe
Neva goin' no more
I'm dead weight
I can't wait
I'm getting out
So hit a route
Show them dudes in the system
What I'm about
I'm not poutin'

Showin' you thugs how to sprout

Behind these walls
I'm neva gone fall
Lookin to the light
Till the day I ball
Behind these walls
I neva gone fall

Behind these walls
Was, Is, No more
It's time to score
It's time to shine
It's time for war
No more behind bars
No more probation
It's my obligation in this situation
Take action
Sixteen months I was facin'
I took the pace to escape
I watched the hate fade away
Simply to say it's a new day
So I hit the booth to lace you
It's the law you facin'
80 G's the payment
The torment is gone the scars are worn
I live to see my son born
It's a beautiful sight, but don't make me turn
overnight

Behind these walls
I'm neva gone fall
Lookin to the light
Till the day I ball

Behind these walls
I neva gone fall

-Lil Jepeabo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "Showin' you thugs how to sprout" - Beautifully written. Show them thugs how to grow. Take action. You are a fighter, don't let these walls take control of you! Nice piece.

Temptations

Temptations infiltrating
Our realities slowly deteriorating
And common sense is quickly fading
An evasion of "no limitations" penetrating
Consuming you into a state of no worries
Or "Hakuna matata" like Timon and Pumba
Said in the Lion King stories
There are so many temptations
Some good and some bad
Some after giving in to them
Make you happy and some make you mad
Temptations are tests of strength and weakness
To see if you are loyal to something or someone
More or less
But you are a human so you're only capable of doing your best
So try your hardest, 'cause things are crazy
This generation
And try not to give in to just any temptation

-J-Boogie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: J, this is a great piece. Nice rhymes and a positive message. Giving into temptations gets us in trouble sometimes. How do you find the strength to have so much self-control?

**No more
behind bars
No more probation
It's my obligation in
this situation
Take action**

Confessions Of Two Car Thieves

Castor And Rickie: Let us start off by saying be careful when you steal cars. Watch out for the rollers, and if they chase you watch out for pedestrians. But for all you car thieves, and wannabe car thieves, here's something for you!

Castor: Damn, Lil' Rickie I heard you boost hella cars.

Lil' Rickie: What's hella to you?

Castor: Man, I would say at least 60 cars every few months, because when I snatch cars, I snatch cars!

Lil' Rickie: Playa 60 every few months — that ain't my style. I hit more like 40 every other night when I'm on. Ha!

Castor: Damn, you a cold character my ninja. You on car thief specialist status. I get hella cars, but I jack cars for cash and a little pleasure.

Lil' Rickie: I feel you on that one Castor, but I get them for dirt.

Castor: I know what you mean, but that's a whole 'notha story. I ain't gonna catch another case for The Beat. Ya feel me!

Lil' Rickie: Fa'show, fa'show playboy! Grandma ain't raised no fool.

Castor: I know what you mean I been off the porch potna, and I'm far from a dummy. But let's talk about the cars you gaffle.

Lil' Rickie: I like snatchin' them cars off the lot. Like the latest Honda and Cherokees.

Castor: Like that playboy!

Lil' Rickie: Hell yeah!

Castor: But me myself — I snatch runners. My favorite car to gaffle is them big body '96 Impala with the 5.7 liter Corvette engine. Ying Yang Twins didn't know the meaning of get low when they made the song, but I do 'cause the Imp's get low. Real low like my potnas from the Fillmore!

Lil' Rickie: Don't get it twisted us Hayward boys get runners. My specialty is them 5.0's.

Castor: I feel you on the real, because us San Francisco boys keep a stolen tucked in the cuts. I remember when I had an Imp' in the cuts, and when I went to get it the yo's (police) blurped me. I got on the gas with the quickness, and the chase was on. I was by Walgreen's, and dipped straight past the post office. Then I jumped out. I was on my stompin' grounds so I got ghosted. You feel me though? That's hella grimy huh?

Lil' Rickie: Yeah, I feel you! But us Hayward boys be nutty too. Let me tell you a little something. All I remember is bouncing from a female's house, and next thing I knew the sheriff blurped me. And I was in a 'Maro on Iroc's so you know I wasn't stoppin'!

Castor: Like that?

Lil' Rickie: Hell yeah, I took 'em straight to yo' city. I was maxing out damn near, and made it to the city in

no time — on an empty tank!

Castor: Damn!

Lil' Rickie: But yeah, next thing I know I'm off the freeway in the city. I was bending corners left and right, but then I misjudged a turn doing damn near 100 and bapped. Then me, my cousin, and folks jumped out. Then 5-0 asked me which way did they go, because they didn't think I was in the car. Of course, I pointed a whole 'nother direction. Feel me!

Castor: Damn, that reminds me when me and my potna was leaving the 'hood and a dirt bike cop started following us. We rushed to put out the weed, but within three minutes there were three more cars and two more dirt bikes. But right before I got to the bread shop I almost lost control, because I was doing 90 over the hump. Luckily it was front wheel drive so I brought it back. I almost tore it up.

Lil' Rickie: You hella lucky!

Castor: You telling me, but soon as I got under the freeway overpass hella cops swarmed and tried to ram me! So I took a quick right. Now I'm flooring it through all the stop signs, but the police had to stop at every one. So I was gaining ground then I started takin' lefts and rights just to shake 'em. Next thing I know I jumped out. I broke and blended in. Police arrested me five blocks away and took me to YGC (juvenile). But after 25 hours they dropped the case. Basically I ran 'em and they had no evidence. Ya nah mean!

Lil' Rickie: That's hella shady, but I'm the shadiest of 'em all, because I stole my neighbor's car!

Castor: Hell nah!

Lil' Rickie: Real talk folks!

Castor: Put me on. Let me know how you pulled that one off.

Lil' Rickie: It gets even shadier than that!

Castor: You wolfin'.

Lil' Rickie: On tha real folks, I was on a home pass from Camp.

Castor: I stole a car from my apartment complex. It was hella early and I didn't have a ride to school, so I went for it. And the dude caught me in it. So I jumped out and he said, "What're you doing in my car?" So I said the first thing that came to mind, "stealing it," and broke on him. He didn't even chase me. But on another note we done told enough.

Lil' Rickie: Hell yeah folks it's a wrap!

Castor: Might as well call it Saran!

-Castor and Lil' Rickie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice dialogue/confession piece between the both of you. You guys really step up here to share your fondness for stealing cars, huh? Sounds like you're untouchable! Then again, you do mention, Castor, a time you were caught. Wake up youngstas! One day you're gonna steal a car from the wrong person. Remember, while you're thinking you got the game on lock — there's always someone two steps ahead of you. Plus, how would y'all feel if y'all accidentally killed someone in a high speed? Trip on this, if you kill someone accidentally in a high speed — you could be charged with murder! So be really careful and don't put yourself in a situation where you're fighting for your life. We know a guy who jacked a car, got in a high speed and killed a pedestrian. Today he is in the SHU in PBSP doing 15 to Life. Appreciate the story.

be careful when you steal cars

Go To Adobe

I am going to Adobe. I get mad because of the judge.
She committed me for the crime.

Now there is nothing I could do but to go do the
time because I committed the crime. I got 9 months,
18 days. I wish if I could be placed on JIPs again, but I
messed that up.

But I am going to go to do my time and get out and
give my son something that I never had. My dad been
in prison all my life and my mom been in prison and
out of prison, too. It used to hurt me when I went to the
park and saw other kids playing with their family and
calling their father "Dad" and their mother "Mom." It
hurts when you don't know what that feeling is like. I
will be there for my son because I never had a father to
call "dad," but my son will have a father to call "dad." I
will make sure of that. That is the end.

-Mariano, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Mariano, it's sad to hear that both your mother and father were in and out of prison for most of your life. We are glad that you have realized that your son needs a father and that you are planning on spending time with him. Do you think that you can break the cycle of staying out of prison? Will you teach your son that crime doesn't pay?

Mama told me to slow down or I could wind up dead.

Life Can Be Bright

Life can be bright, bright as a star
My life is bright; think where you are
Life can be bright; it can also be gleaming
I think about deep when I'm in my bed dreaming
Life can be bright no matter where you are
Whether you're at home or someplace real far
Life can be bright no matter your condition
I'm gonna succeed because life is my mission.
Life can be bright, flip on the switch
But if you do drugs, you'll lay in a ditch.
Life can be bright, but full of mistakes
Not always fun like candles and cakes.
Life can bright, bright like the sun
See it like that, not a spark from a gun.
Life can be bright, brighter than flares
Don't settle small, go big like the mayor.
Life can be bright, even if you're scarred
Why go through life trying to act hard?
Life can be bright, depends how it's played
Don't let your bright be reflected off a blade.
Life can be bright, write to The Beat
Let it flow from your heart but not from a heat.
Life can be bright, but full of surprises
It can also be beautiful like when the sun rises

-Kory, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Kory, it is good to hear from you again. You have stepped up to the challenge to put a positive slant on your flows and amazed us again. You have been through a lot over the last year. We think your future is promising, knowing you can still smile brightly and see the positive in life. Though life is not always fun, what steps can you take, Kory, to make your life meaningful and positive? We hope you will continue to brighten our pages with your lyrics.

Life In The Good 'Hood

I want them rims
On my low rider,
Ruff riders, big timers,
On the nickels and dimers,
Time to get this rhyme
And make it go all-time,
Got my girl and my son
In this affluent neighborhood
And that's good,
And I ceased to run
From the police,
I cease my jeans
When I was walkin' around,
Went from the ground
To the top in one easy stop,
By going to school, where I rule
The concrete I beat the streets,
Where I was bustin' hit beats and flows
And now it's time to go

-White Russian, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Vincent, so now you ruling in school instead of the streets? Does that mean you're challenging yourself to get the most out of school? Is it really that easy to go from poverty to affluence? How can you use your intelligence to achieve your dreams and stay free at the same time? We encourage you to check out an author by the name of Og Mandino. He is someone who went from rags to riches. You may gain some insight from him on how to do this without risking your freedom.

Mistake

As I creep through the darkest streets of my little town
I hear the silence of the dead. But I still have a question.
I walk up to a man and ask him: where is your sorrow,
where is your love? He says "no". So I hit him. And I hear
a voice that says: I will get you later.
Now I'm stuck in a cell wishing I'd used caution. Now I
know what a mistake I made.

-Lesson Learned, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: If you listen carefully, you'll hear another voice. It's a soft voice, but it almost always lets you know if you're about to make a mistake. By paying attention to this voice, you'll save yourself a lot of pain and suffering.

What Do They See?

I don't know. Why don't you tell me?
I'm a gangster, just another minority forced to be a "g"
Once upon a time I was honest and labored in the fields.
At the end of the day I was as proud as I could be,
because I helped support my family.
As the years went by, the money was slow
and I was introduced to a game I didn't know.
I was in way over my head.
Mama told me to slow down or I could wind up dead.
I'm out of time. So you tell me - what do you see?

-Ismael, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We see a smart fellow who is beginning to figure out what he really wants in life. We see a guy who knows that change isn't easy, but that it must happen, if he's to realize his potential. We see a guy who could, if he worked hard, find himself in college. We see a guy who could lead others in his community, by example. Now, what does he see?

My Life

Sometimes life can be a pain
 When your life stays the same
 I've had cancer, not once, but twice
 And it isn't very nice
 I hate cancer really a lot
 It ties my life in a knot
 Sometimes I think the doctor's lie
 At times I think I am going to die
 Before I end up in a coffin
 I'll do my fun things soon and often
 I had a transplant; it wasn't fun
 It's hard to believe that I am finally done
 Sometimes I wish I could roll over and die
 Now I think I am going to cry
 When you're there you have to roll with the punches
 Especially when it comes to the lunches
 When I went to receive what my dad had to give
 I was the second to do it, but the first to live
 It was hard for us all, it could make you hysterical
 But if you think about it, I am living a miracle

-Brandon, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: What insight . . . "living a miracle"! Facing death can cause one to reconsider his priorities in life. How have these experiences changed you? Are you still trying to cheat death with your current lifestyle? How can you take the gift of life that you have been given and use it to impact the world in a positive way? You were born for such a time as this. What is your life mission?

My Brother's Dream

I wish that my brother hadn't died. If he was with us, he could help me to make better decisions, like going to school and helping mom.

When he was alive, he used to take me to school and pick me up. I was proud of my brother. So now I will change my life by going to school. I'll try to get a good job and take my mom out of the fields, because that was my brother's dream.

-P, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: That's a great dream. You'd make everyone proud, like your brother did. What do you miss most about him? If he were here right now — what would you say to him?

Daydream

As I daydream in my room, I think about my girl and my family and how many times I've hurt them. I know they forgive me, but they've done it so many times. And I keep coming back to this place.

Here I sit in my cell with only a window through which to send out my dreams. I imagine myself kicking it with the homies and my family at the park, throwing a BBQ, having a great time.

With much love and respect...

-Esequiel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: So, if you are trapped in an unhealthy pattern of behavior, the first question, logically, is: how can I break this pattern? Have you asked yourself that question? If not, ask it. Now...respond to your question. You don't have to come up with the right answers immediately. Use your imagination. And start writing down any possibilities that occur to you. Put your responses away for a day or so. Then pick them up again and see what makes sense. Also, when you're falling asleep, ask yourself that question over and over: what do I need to do to break the pattern of bad behavior I'm caught up in? A recent study indicates that many of us can solve problems in our sleep. But we need to set the situation up by asking our unconscious mind for assistance. Give it a try — ask yourself what you need to do to change your behavior.

Victim Is Me

So blind too
 So blind too
 That she is suffering for me
 I couldn't see
 I walk past her
 Family every day
 But I can't say
 They're so mean I ask the same
 That shame that
 She hurts I look at her
 I see it we never talk about

So blind too
 So blind too
 How could this be that
 I think or her every day
 The thing I did to make her pay
 Now I stay so deep inside
 That the pain comes in ways

So blind too
 So blind too
 To see that the victim is me
 So blind to overcome the victimized pain
 Or my pain now going insane
 Thinking I am hurting someone else

So blind too see
 So blind too
 So blind too

-Berry, San Mateo

From The Beat: The cracks of meaning that penetrate the veil of words that cascade from your pencil let us in on your pain. The shame that you feel for hurting her, the pain you feel each time you see each other and don't talk about it seems to be eating you up inside. There's so much that's just peeking through the surface here; we'd love to know more. In what ways are you the victim as well? How can you overcome your own blindness as well as encouraging others to see the truth as well? We're worried that whatever it is that has you feeling like you're going insane will become unbearable unless you let it out into the open. How are you hurting someone else?

Mistakes

I've made many mistakes in my time.
 A lot of them I wish I had not done,
 Because every time I've made one
 It seems I hear a voice say:
 Put your hands on your head.
 And all I feel is sorrow and rage.
 I ask a question, like: why?
 But they respond with:
 You have the right to remain silent...
 And they slam the door in my face.

-Tonio, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Tonio — you're getting good. In just the last month or so, your writing has begun to take off. This is something you can take with you everywhere. When you're feeling down or frustrated or a bit empty inside, pick up a pencil and write. As the words pour out, a peaceful feeling will pour in. And if it doesn't pour in, it will trickle in. Any peace in a time of anxiety is good. Writing will help you find what we're all looking for. Good work.

'Til The Very End

I love it when I see my mom
 I love it when I do no harm
 I love it when I reach my goals
 Even when I'm so alone
 I'll love it when I'm going home
 I'll love it when I step outside
 I'll love it if I don't come back
 I'll love it when I'm in my home
 But most of all . . .

I love it when I'm with my mom and sister
 But then again I'm in my cell thinking till the very end!

-Simply D, San Mateo

From The Beat: We love it when you write. We love it when you put your thoughts down like this, and we love it when we see this piece as a result. Keep it up.

Legal Murder?

Should the state kill? I feel that all forms of legal murder are as just as bad as murder in the streets. The death penalty, euthanasia, and war are legal murders, but why should anyone have the right to kill, under any circumstances?

I think when a person commits murder and is sentenced to die; it just doesn't make any sense. It is just more killing. When our country goes to war, I know there are different ways to solve our differences besides death. When it comes to euthanasia, I feel like those people should die when it is their time and no sooner. If they're in pain, they can be medicated, not helped in suicide.

So no, I don't think the state should kill. No one has to the right to take another life but God, and no person should have to die before that.

-Krystal, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: We couldn't have put it any better than you. Many folks believe that if it's wrong to kill in one situation, then killing should be wrong all the time, and you articulate this position very well.

**I have never felt so stripped of my
 self-respect until the very night I had
 ran away from the CPS shelter
 I was in.**

After The Question

There was a moment of silence after my homeboy asked his question.

And then the doorbell rang.

It stopped him.

Gunfire went off in the room.

There was no sign.

It was a mistake for my homeboy to die.

I can hear his voice in my head.

Peace out homeboy.

-David, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is a tragedy. Don't let it happen again. Peace to all your homies. And peace to the people you think are your enemies. From where we stand, the picture is clearer. We see young people who need a good education and good jobs. We see kids suffering from the same social inequities (look that word up) who take out their frustrations on each other. You are not each other's enemies. The real enemy is the lack of opportunity. And it will take peace and cooperation to change that situation - not bullets and tears.

Yes And No

There is a yes and a no answer to whether the state should kill. There are three different ways the state kills. There is the death penalty, war and doctor assisted suicide. I think they are all yes except war. I don't think the state should draft people to war for them to fight for the country if they don't want to because it's basically murdering them.

I do think it's okay to do the death penalty 'cause they deserve to die if they took another's life also. I do think it's okay for doctors to assist patients in suicide if they have a death-like illness, others may have a different opinion on this matter.

Some may think that war is not murder because there should be people that fight for our country. Some people may also think that the death penalty is not okay because a life should not be taken away no matter what they do. Also, some people think that a doctor's assistance in suicide is wrong because no one should help someone in ending their life.

-Keila, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: Nice job taking on the topic. You make a lot of good points. Do you wonder if you'd say the same things if you were in the situation yourself?

Silence...

Silence in the courtroom!

Any more questions before we begin sentencing?

Just then my family marches through the door like a platoon
 And my sister's pager's going off like a church bell.

I see the sorrow on her face. Damn that pager to hell!

I wish I were anywhere else but sitting in this chair.

I am not signing that paper. That sentencing wasn't fair.

I know I made a mistake.

I ain't no hero, but damn, I ain't fake.

The voice in my head tells me to shut up,
 for God's sake.

-Ishmael, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Yes. We knew you had it in you. Fine poem. This is the beginning. Are you a disciplined guy? Are you a persistent fellow? If you begin a writing practice, you could turn into the real thing. There's poetry in your blood. But like all things worthwhile, it will take practice to perfect your gift. Are you up for it? What will you do in your placement? How will you keep from being in that same court room scene again?

When I Ran Away

I have never felt so stripped of my self-respect until the very night I had ran away from the CPS shelter I was in. I had decided to run away with another girl who was brought in the night before. We ran away and she took me to where a bunch of her gangster homeboys kicked it.

We were all huffing carburetor cleaner, and at some point I said my goodbyes and left on my way to where my mom was staying. On my way out to the bus stop, I was attacked and raped by three of her homeboys. To this day I'm very ashamed of myself for putting myself in that kind of situation.

-Jesse, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: No man has a right to do that to any female. You didn't put yourself in that situation because you didn't know that it was going to happen. Only if you knew that it was going to happen could you say it was your fault. Don't feel ashamed of that. It was your fault for running away from the CPS shelter, but not when you were raped. Have you been able to talk to anyone about this incident, maybe other females who have been through similar things?

No Te Quise Lastimar

Perdóname, yo no te quise lastimar y espero que lo entiendas. Estoy arrepentido y quiero rectificar mi error. Por eso es que te pido que me perdones aunque sé que puede ser difícil para ti.

Pero de verdad que estoy arrepentido. Voy buscar ayuda para ya no lastimar a nadie. Espero que no me guardes rencor aunque yo de verdad estoy seguro que tú puedes perdonarme. Bueno, eso es todo lo que te quiero decir.

From The Beat: Es lo mejor que deberías de hacer para que no te vuelva a pasar lo mismo. ¿Tienes a alguien en mente quien te ayude? Todo se puede en esta vida, si en verdad eso es lo que quieres, pues es lo que obtendrás. Si en verdad quieres demostrarle a esta persona que estas arrepentido, vas a tener que demostrarles un poco más que palabras.

I Didn't Want To Hurt You

Forgive me, because I did not mean to cause you any harm and I hope that you understand. I regret what I did and I want to rectify my error. That's why I beg you to forgive me, even though I know that it may be difficult for you to do so.

But honestly, I'm really sorry. I'm going to seek help so I don't hurt anybody. I hope you don't hold any grudges against me because I'm positive that you can forgive me. Well, that's everything that I have to say to you. The rest is up to you.

-Fidencio, Santa Cruz

Cuando ellos nos agarran cuando venimos imigrando, nos agarran sin piedad alguna, como lo hicieron conmigo

Lo Malo Que Son Las Drogas

Si tubiera la oportunidad de explicarte lo malo que son las drogas, le dijera que se estan haciendo daño ustedes mismo, y a su familia por reocuparlos.

Un extraño que quiere lo malo para mí, no me dijera nada mas bien se burlaría de mí porque no me conoce. Ellos no le guardan resentimientos a nadie más bien te buscan para que te sigas dañando más, vendiendote drogas. No saben el daño que les causa la drogas.

From The Beat: Es verdad, una persona que hace cosas malas, como vender drogas, no es amigo. Sólo te quiere ver destruido, te quiere acabar con tu dinero, es todo lo que quiere. Esperamos que de corazón ustedes entiendan que aquel que te vende drogas, y te esta destruyendo al guiarte al mal camino, no es la persona que necesitas tener en tu vida.

How Bad Drugs Are

If I had the opportunity to explain to you how bad drugs are, I would tell you that you're hurting yourself by using drugs, and your family as well, because you have them worried about you.

A stranger will not tell you how bad drugs are for you. That stranger would just laugh at you because they don't know you. They don't give a damn about you. They'll just be on the lookout for you so they can sell you drugs so you can continue causing harm to yourself. You don't know how bad drugs are for you.

-Erick B4, SF/YGC

Si Pudiera Hacer Una Ley

Si pudiera hacer una ley, haría que dejaran que se queden los Mexicanos en los Estados Unidos. Cuando ellos nos agarran cuando venimos imigrando, nos agarran sin piedad alguna, como lo hicieron conmigo. Por eso estoy en la cárcel, pero no me aguito porque algún día regresare a este país, porque este lugar antes pertenecía a México.

From The Beat: Creemos que tu ley favorecería a muchas personas, pero porque sólo a los Mexicanos, que tal de los demás Latinos. Esperamos que cualquiera rumbo que tomes, que lo tomes con calma y que no te desesperes, y que pienses bien que es lo que realmente quieres.

If I Could Make A Law

If I could make a law, I would make a law allowing every Mexican that's already in the United States to stay in the United States. When they catch us while we're trying to make our way into the United States, they don't show us any mercy, like they didn't to me. That's why I'm jail. But I don't get sad because someday I will return to this country because this territory used to belong to Mexico.

-Conejo, Marin

Estoy Deacuerdo Con La Ley

Yo estoy deacuerdo con la ley porque si no hubiera leyes todo sería un desmadre. No hubiera juras, juices, y la gente haría lo que ellos quisieran. Pudieran matar, violar, y hacer otros tipos de violencia. Por eso yo digo que esta bien que haya más leyes en este país y en otros países.

From The Beat: Estas en lo cierto, esto y muchas otras cosas más pueden pasar si no hubieran leyes. Muchos de los jóvenes dijeron que sería mejor que no hubiera leyes, pero tú dices que las leyes hacen de la vida lo mejor. Creemos que estas en lo cierto que las leyes ayudan a desminuir la violencia.

I Agree With The Law

I'm cool with the laws we have right now because if there weren't any laws, everything would be crazy. There would be no cops, no judges, and people would do whatever they want. People could kill, rape, and commit other acts of violence. That's why I see it's cool that we have the kinds of laws that we have in this country and in other countries.

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

Ellos no le guardan resentimientos a nadie más bien te buscan para que te sigas dañando más, vendiendote drogas

Si Tubiera La Oportunidad

De Ver A Mi Víctima

Bueno, oh yes, si que yo tubiera la oportunidad de ver a mi víctima, yo le pidieraw dusculpa porque pienso que él no es tan mala persona como yo, quien cometió el crimen.

Yo andaba molesto con mi jaina, me encontré a esta persona, y me la desquite con él. Ahora estoy pagando las consecuencias y por eso es que voy a hacer tiempo en CYA.

Pero aún así yo no estoy molesto, no siento ni un odio por mi víctima ni por mi jaina, ni por nadie. Me siento mal conmigo mismo porque fui yo el que me menti en esta situación.

From The Beat: Se notó que no pudistes contra tu enojo, deberías de buscar la manera como controlarlo, porque no todas las veces que te enojas te vas a meter en problemas. ¿Crees que esto sea un problema? Porque si en verdad lo es, esperamso que busques ayuda. Mira nomas las cosas que cometistes, por culpa de un enojo, nunca mescles el agua con el aceite, porque no se pueden mezclar.

If I Had The Chance To Meet My Victim

Well, oh yeah, if I had the opportunity to see my victim, I would ask him for forgiveness because I think that he is not as bad a person as me, the person who committed the crime.

I was mad at my female, and I ran into this person and I took out my anger on him. Now I'm paying the consequences and that's why I'm going to do time in CYA.

Anyways, I'm not mad and I don't feel any kind of hatred towards my victim, or towards my female, or for anybody. The only person I'm mad at is myself because I put myself in this situation.

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

Why don't we get together and change?

You Make Me Feel Warm And Safe

I love it when you love me, daddy

I love it when you hug me

You make me feel warm and safe

I love it when you tell me

I'll always be your little girl

Even though I'm grown

I love it when you're here

Instead of far away

But, mostly, I love it

When you love me, daddy

-Sad Eyes, Marin

From The Beat: This poem is wonderful. Why don't you send it to your father? Some dads have no idea how much they mean to their daughters. You capture the feeling so sweetly.

Te Recuerdo Todos Los Días

Hace un mes y un día que no te veo y te extraño como no te imaginas. Todos los días me acuerdo de todo lo que hacíamos juntos. Recuerdo la primera vez que te vi, la primera vez que hablamos, la primera vez que bailamos, y el primer beso que nos dimos. También la primera vez que me dijistes que me amabas y que nunca quería separarte de mí.

Ahora, tenemos que separarnos porque tengo que irme a un group home y no voy a verte por un tiempo, pero yo sé que cuando termine mi programa, vamos a estar juntos y realizaremos nuestros sueños juntos. No olvides que te amo.

From The Beat: Que lindo es esta carta Mayra. La verdad es que se nota que quieres mucho a esta persona. Si tanto estas enamorada de él, pues búscalo y no te dejes caer a este lugar. La vida es mejor afuera que adentro, no seas tonta y quedate con la personas que realmente quieres. Pero precuara que te quiera él igual como lo quieres. Y si se prometieron cosas, cumplanla.

I Remember You Every Day

It's been about a month and a day since the last time I laid eyes on you, and you can't even imagine how much I'm missing you right now. Every day I think about all the things we used to do together. I remember the first time I saw you, the first time we talked, the first time we danced, and our first kiss. Also, the first time you told me that you loved me and that you would never leave me.

Now we have to part ways because I have to go to a group home and I'm not going to see you for a while, but I know that when I finish my program, we're going to be together and make our dreams a reality, together. Don't forget that I love you.

-Mayra, 150 Crew

Faith, Hope And Love

Faith, hope and love

Words spoken by the Father above

But when push comes to shove

Why is it that from these ways we run?

These sweet ways

That guarantee better days

Still we wonder why

Our world's in a haze

Tears falling like rain

Why don't we get together and change?

Simon, that's what I would like to see

What a fantasy

This world could be

That would truly bring joy to me

Faith, hope and love

Simon, that's the key

-Sad Eyes, Marin

From The Beat: What a beautiful poem, Sad Eyes! Why do you think people run from faith, hope and love? Why don't we get together and change? What solutions would you recommend to make this world a wonderful place for everyone? What about for yourself?

Daddy's Baby Girl

I have no daddy.

He's gone.

You see my biological daddy was taken from me.

I did get to meet him. We didn't get to talk.

Me and my daddy never got to have that walk.

I hate this. This makes me sad.

How I miss my dear ol' dad.

I will find him one day of this I'm positive,

But only with my dad I could live.

I miss him dearly even though we've never met.

I will find him even though

I haven't found him yet.

I will find him, you'll see.

I will be daddy's baby girl.

-Melissa, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: Calling out to all fathers: Where the hell are you? What's more important than taking care of your kids? Melissa, we feel your pain because many of us don't have fathers. What is one characteristic you think every kid wants in a father? Would you demand this of your future baby daddy?

Predict The Future

I love it when I can predict the future. When I finally tally up the whole five dollars, not a cent short, and know what every last penny is gonna go to. I love the feeling I get upon entering the Chevron, knowing what's soon to come. The way the employees know what will be purchased by the amount of change laying on the counter. 100s, the only way to go. No need to ask for ID, because my age is irrelevant.

I need this pack of 'Ports, and when you need something, it's a responsibility. So there it is, it's a beauty. Green and white, with the upside-down swoosh as a sign of things to come.

I love the process almost as much as the product itself. Packing is key; no fingers on the bottom — side only. Rotation of the box, crucial element on extracting all of which the contents have to offer. Remove all plastic, and all visible foil. These things are a must. Now you're almost there. You gently slide the one directly in the middle, away from the rest, and replace it upside down. All for luck, and you're set.

You grab three — one in the ear, one for your boy from San Francisco, and lastly, one for yourself. You spark them at the same time, and it's a beautiful sight. I love the first Newport of the day.

-Port Lover, Marin

From The Beat: This is a really funny story of your purchasing Newport's, taking off the plastic, pulling one out and smoking it with your homies. Does your Newport routine ever vary or get screwed up? How are you managing in Juvy without your 'Ports? Do all your routines give you this much pleasure? Why or why not?

**It's a sin to gangbang
in Marin, when you
got it made
So much money, it's
funny, forget grades**

Dark SECRETS

I love it when Alana, my girlfriend says, "I love you"

I love it when she looks into my eyes with hers

I love it when she holds my hand with her soft fingers

I love it when she puts her silky black hair up in a bun

I love it when she has her belly showing

I love it when her soft, glossy lips kiss mine

I love it when she says, "I love you more than life"

I love it when she makes weird noises

I love it when she gets confused

I love it when she drinks her water

I love it when she lays and watches TV

I love it when she tells me dark secrets

I love it when she's even in bad moods

I love it when she asks me questions

I love it when she catches me lying

I love it when she answers the phone and says,

"Hello?"

Most of all I love her — Alana

-Jake, Marin

From The Beat: Your lady sounds lovely Jake. We're glad that you cheris her the way you do. What do you think she likes about you? Has she told you? Why do you lie to her? Don't you know if you lie to her once, she won't be able to believe anything you tell her?

Life

Life's a you know what

Sometimes I pray, other times I wish

That I could move past this

Face existence

Suicide comes like the tide in an instance

Pain's getting close, give me some distance

Feeling last on the list

Tried solving bullshhh with my fists

Tried solving pain under the influence

Too many enemies, tried to co-exist

Called the bluff, slap cuffs I just resist

Do it, hate this

I write from the heart, but spit from the head

Can't read, then heard what I said

Don't judge me 'til I'm truly dead

Don't mug me, dressed in blue or red

'Cause all these colors got cats startin' to fade

It's a sin to gangbang in Marin,

when you got it made

So much money, it's funny, forget grades

I claim green, get paid

Never behave like a slave

I'll take that to the grave

Curve them nerves, ninja, blaze

Blowin' so much weed

Some say there's no hope

So I can find the trees and you can find the rope

Teachers are preachers, trying to teach me to cope

Drop out — I didn't for the dope

I did it, 'cause I did it

You can ask my folks

-Tite Rapper, Marin

From The Beat: If fighting and drugs can't diminish your pain, what do you think could help it? Praying? Hoping for a better future? Can you take any steps into actually solving or changing any of your problems? If so, how? Do you think that if you took the time in Juvy to go over whatever is bothering or haunting you, you could take a fresh look at potential solutions, and maybe step-by-step solve one at a time?

Thoughts

This goes out to the girl who got raped. Why did this have to happen to you like this? When I heard the info about this, I could not believe it at first, or I didn't want to believe it. I hope that person can handle what is coming to him. Why my loved one, God? Did I not pray for this person and ask you to protect that person? God works in weird ways. I miss you, person. I just have to get this off my mind before I just take off on somebody who doesn't deserve it.

Today has been just like yesterday. I hope for the light at the end of the tunnel to be the true light. My heart is still pumping life into my soul that won't give up on me. I can't give up on myself. I am not going to. Why does life only last for about ninety years? I am young, with a dream to make my life what I want it to be. I want to be somebody who will make a difference in this world before I die. I have been sitting on my ass for about two months. I need to have hope in myself and trust in myself. I have a lot of growing up to do, before I can tell someone else to grow up. I was once acting like that before. I love it when I can kick back and look at the stars with a girl on my side.

Do what makes you happy and live your life. Do what you can do and are willing to do the next time. Forget the shhh that gets us down to the ground — that will make you want to kill yourself. Why is it like this? I don't know. Are you listening to me when I tell you all this stuff?

I like you and care about you very much. I am in this place, thinking about you 24-7 on the dot. What are you thinking of right now? Be positive in everything you do. Do you want to go or stay for the rest of three weeks? How does it feel to be totally free, with no worries?

I miss my grandma and my mom. I miss my brothers and my dad. My grandma is like my other mom to me. She is my heart and joy. I hope I make it out the other side alive. How can you say that to me about the one of a kind? Dime on my mind. You know that if you go, I don't think my body will flow. I need a haircut bad. I am looking like a carcass on wheels, with one thing that I can't spill.

-Krawlar, Marin

From The Beat: You have a lot of thoughts streaming through your mind. How did the girl you speak about overcome her rape? You have a lot of subjects in your essay — your hopes and dreams for your future. What do you hope your life will be like? How would it be different from the direction your life is going now? How can you make your future better than your past?

**I still had “I
want to run
away” in me.
I ran a lot.**

The Girl

There's a girl in my unit
She's a friend of mine
She's only sixteen
And out selling dimes
When she's get out on da block
She's gets caught in the wrong mix
Out selling dope
To knocks and tricks.
With the rocks she selling
Gets her arrested
And brought back here
And dirty pee tested
She was to be released yesterday
But she's here now
And here she stays.

-Baby D, San Mateo

From The Beat: What advice do you have to offer that girl? Maybe you could start by providing her an ear that will listen to what she has to say and a shoulder for support as she says it. Can you show her by example what it will take to come through the Hall and step towards a better path?

My Life

I'm go write bout my life — it ain't no front, Now I ain't got no sad story for you. My life was not so bad until I was seven years old. My bro was ten years old when he died. Then comes my dad a month later. I did not even cry.

I guess the year without him was not too bad. It didn't really hit me until I was nine. I broke into a house. That was my first charge. I fell bad for that though. I could not be in my house 'cause I thought I would see my dad dead in my room where I usually saw him, so I ran away a lot.

I jumped into the gang that my dad was in — that was not workin' for me. When I finally came home one day and stayed for 'bout ten days, my granny said I was goin' to check out a new school with her — knowin' that I would not go. When we got there to my surprise it was a group home. We talked to some people and they wanted to talk to me alone, that's when she was up and gone. I never in my life forgave her.

I stayed there for 'bout three weeks. I went home had a party with my family. Then I ran to get back at her. I was gone for a month before I returned. My granny got mad, but she said she was “scared” I would get hurt. She pointed out rape. She put me back in the same group home. I ran from there two times, never did it again.

I was there for 'bout two years and went to a group home in Fremont. I still had “I want to run away” in me. I ran a lot. Some bad things happened to me, but I was coo' 'bout it. It was not new to me. I ran away too much; they got tired of me.

I got locked up in Oakland — that's where I'm really from. My granny moved to Daily City. So they moved me here on May 2, 2003. Something didn't go right so I went back to Oakland. They let me out the next day, went to a group home in San Mateo. Got in too many fights, went back to the Hall, got out and came back two weeks later. That's just been me for the last year.

I did stay out this last time for two months. I was happy. I got to go now, but I'll be sure to holla at y'all lata.

-Lil' Lay Lay, San Mateo

From The Beat: Sounded like you had a pretty long adventure. What made you keep running away from those group homes? It's obvious that you like staying on the outs since you said you were happy the last time you stayed out for two months — if so, what kept you from staying? Are you still made at your granny? If you put yourself in her shoes, can you understand her decision put you in a group home even though it seems like a harsh decision? What's it going to take to start breaking that cycle of get out for a minute only to return to the Hall, or to a group home, or to some other form of custody? We know there's more here, and we'd love to see you keep comin' with it.

People Trusted Me

I loved it when people trusted me, believed in me, had hope for me. I loved it when everyone's parents loved me and welcomed me into their homes. Before, I was "the bad influence." I loved it when I could have some fun and never have to worry about getting caught. I loved it when I had trust in the people around me, because they earned it. I loved it when I was loved, when I could love. But that's over.

Love is just a lost memory, a faded joke that no one laughs at. Love is one of those things you look back on in your maturity and laugh at, a fantasy that will never come true until you can revert back to your days of innocence and ignorance.

-Conrad, Marin

From The Beat: In the past did you take advantage of people who trusted you? Then something went wrong and you got busted and lost people's faith in you? It may take a while for people to learn that you're reliable, but they will. Do you have the patience to wait and teach people they can trust you again? You sound like you're down on love right now. Is it possible people are afraid you'll hurt them again? Can you earn people's trust and love again?

I've Got

I've got a lot of time
And a lot more on my mind
I'm behind bars again
For my wicked ways and crimes
I think back on the days that I messed up
How I thought my life was an empty cup
I've been incarcerated far too long
I think it's time for me to get the hell on
Take another step in my life
Hopefully up
Not down
It's time to smile
No more frowns
I'm looking forward to my release date
Walk away from these locked doors
And barbed-wire gates
Time to start over with a clean slate
Please God keep me in line
Away from crime
And on your mind
I'm sorry for what I've done
Now it's time for me to move on
Thank you for this second chance.

-Young Uso, San Mateo

From The Beat: Don't discount what else you've got — a growing understanding of who you are and the challenges you face, and a goal of starting over and making this second chance work. It is always a good start to recognize what one did wrong and to know that it's bout time to move on. What's it going to take for you to stay on the outs? How will you make this time the last time?

Applying for College While Incarcerated

S'up Beat? I don't like the topics this week, Beat,

I've been trying to get my college stuff out the way. Being up in here, it's hard trying to apply to college because things are not accessible in here. The staff in B5 are cool, and they be helping me out. My parents also play a big part because they have been all around to receive financial aid papers.

It's been hard, but I'm almost done with it though. Everyone keep your head up, till next time.

-Diddy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: See, you have to work to get what you want, you feel? What we like most about this piece, Diddy, is not just that you're applying to college, but that you're doing it despite the difficulties. We are happy for you that you are trying to get a head start. It is always good to make good use of your time. Sorry you didn't feel our topics this week. Got any suggestions? Got topic?

**I'm about to give this gang
banging up 'cause really this
lockdown thang really brings
a ninja down.**

My Turnaround

What's up Beat? What's good y'all? Me, just went to court and they gave me some good news. I'm not going to the Y. Instead, I'm going to ROP. I'm hella glad 'cause now I don't have to stress about where I'm going.

I'm about to give this gang banging up 'cause really this lockdown thang really brings a ninja down. So I'm gon' go knock that ROP out, get out and start stacking my chips up, but this time I'ma try to do it the right way. Feel me?

Well, I'm a leave it at that. Peace out and stay out the system. Find a way to pimp this shhhh. It's really nothing. All you gots to do is put yo' mind to something positive, do something different for a change.

All right, Beat, thanks for letting me share my opinions on how I see things.

-Oso B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We are hella glad for you too. When you say you're "about to" give up banging, when does that time arrive? There's no time like the present. What is the "right way" to stack your chips? What kind of work do you see yourself doing? Hope everything works out the way you want it to.

I Regret

I regret everything that has happened the past
three months
I regret the selfishness I have been showing to
my parents
I regret the bad attitude I have been giving to
my parents
My parents have been here for me my entire life
I don't understand why I've been treating them
this way
I regret the drugs
I regret that night
But most of all, I regret that small pill that
killed my friend
I'm promising myself I'm going to change

-Tiny, San Mateo

From The Beat: This whole situation is tragic — no other word captures all that has happened. It must haunt you to keep thinking about it. We are not trying to be mean or anything, but the truth is, there is nothing you can do but regret it. If you regret the selfishness that you've been giving your parents, let 'em know and make it back up every chance you get. Why do you think you've been treating them so poorly? How can you make your regret known to your parents — even to her parents — so that the healing can begin?

**Love is just a lost
memory, a faded joke
that no one laughs at.**

No One Loves The Ugly One

The ugly one gets no love
The ugly one has no one to trust
The ugly one wants him bad
The ugly one never felt so sad
The ugly one tries to change what he don't like
So she got all his love

No one loves the ugly one
No one will ever love the ugly one

The ugly one tries to make herself look like the
people she see in mags or on TV
But she never make it

No one loves the ugly one
No one will ever love the ugly one
I guess it's true no one loves the ugly one.

-Lil' LayLay, San Mateo

From The Beat: What a sad and difficult piece, and what a sad and difficult situation. Although it sounds corny and often feel untrue, real beauty is within a person, not outside. No matter how ugly one can be, there will be always someone out there that find the beauty in them. This is a beautiful, well-written poem — its beauty suggests beauty within the person who wrote these words.



I Love To Be Loved

-I love it when the sun shines.
-I love it when time is paused.
-I love it when I hear the sound of applause.
-I love it when I'm told I'm needed.
-I love it when I'm felt for.
-I love it when I'm noticed.
-I love it when I'm told I'm important.
-I love it when rain drops.
-I love it when my brother plays.
-I love it when he hugs me.
-I love it when he shows emotion.
-I love it....

Lost Fortune, San Mateo

From The Beat: We love your opening line, and all that follow. Such simple things, but so important to us all. Well done.

Don't Give Up Lil' Mamma!

(Dedicated To Friskie)

Don't give up lil' momma
I know you've been through hella drama,
But take it from me
A hard life is the key
The key to becoming strong
You have to keep moving along
Giving up is a sign of weakness
Keep showing your uniqueness
Show people you're a fighter
You deserve to live higher
In a world full of love,
So fight to be above
Above all this hate and drama
So don't give up lil' mamma!

-Prince Charming, San Mateo

From The Beat: It was big of you to step up with words of encouragement when you saw a young sista going through it. We hope there isn't a hidden agenda behind those sweet words. We wouldn't want to read another piece about someone getting their heart broken. What makes Friskie so special to you? Are you just being a good man, or are you just being a bad man? Only time — and you — will tell...

A War Against Bush

I want to make a law that if you don't agree with what the president is doing, you should be able to vote on it. Also, if the president takes the country to war, he should have to fight in it. If the president orders people to war and they kill people or die, then he should be prosecuted as a murderer.

Bush is a murderer. He's killing innocent people in Iraq, Columbia, Washington, and other places, including woman and children. He should be taken out of office.

If we had a law like this, we wouldn't be at war. All those people wouldn't be dead. That's all I got for now.

-Oso B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Thanks for stepping up and taking this topic seriously, Oso. What do you think would happen if the President had to fight in his war? What would happen if his children — or the children of the Congressmen and women who voted for it — had to fight? Do you think that would make it more difficult to go to war? Why?

I Love It

I love it when I have fun with everyone I love. Examples are like friends, family and my girl. Have a party with friends and family. Spending time with my girl, chilling with her and talking about our baby soon to be born.

But I mostly don't be with them no more because I work nowadays. I barely spend time with my girl, chill with my homeboys and be with the family 'cause I go home late and they all sleeping, so I'm the only one awake. So nowadays I don't spend any time with them, but I try 'cause I love 'em.

-E B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We really hope you'll be able to get a job soon that will allow you to spend time with the folks you love. We know how important that is to keeping folks motivated and positive.

My Struggle In This Life

Well, my name is Candice, and I been through a lot in my life. I don't know why, but I feel that my life won't change. As much as I hate being in here, I seem to continue to do the crap that keeps me in here. I have an addiction, which is money. I will, by any means necessary, do anything to get money. And it's real sad, 'cause I have went as low as degrading myself just for the love of money. I'm a very beautiful, intelligent, young lady, but my addiction to money is where my downfall in life happens.

You know, I'm really scared for myself because I feel something tragic in my life is going to have to happen in order for me to really wake up. You know, I wish that I could wake up right now and not have to wait till something bad happens, but I know once I get out of here in two days, I will go back to the things I did before to get money.

-Candice GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We feel scared for you, too, Candice, and we wish we could say something that would get you to change your ways before tragedy has to strike. Do you think you want something negative to happen to you and that's why you keep setting yourself up? And why do you think you are so addicted to money? Is it having it or is it buying stuff with it? And, can you out your desires on hold while you go through school and get into a career that will earn you money that's legit?

This Life Is Hectic

This life is hectic

Brain waves and mind frames change up unexpected

Livin' this dope game for the right thangs

And keep 'em separate

But snatch the wrong necklaces

An' ya dead before ya eyes blink

So I'm goin' to Walden House for 90 days so I can think

So I'm readin' a spiritual book for wonder times, simple and deep

So instead of runnin' these streets

I'm prayin' to God before I sleep

But not for the sake of safety

But the courage to change me

So I can elevate my level of thought

instead of thinking the same thing

So keep ya negative comments 'cause what you say can't faze me

So I put my life in God's hands 'cause only Jesus can save me.

-Daniel B2, SFG/YGC

From The Beat: Interesting flow, Daniel. We respect the attitude you have about taking time to think and rethink your life and look for meaning beyond the streets. We hope you'll make the most of your time at Walden house.

Meet the Judge, One On One

One law I would like to pass would be for the judge to sit down with me one on one and hear me out.

I would also like to see a law that already exists, be rigorously enforced. It is the law that people cannot judge you by the color of your skin or the way you talk or walk or look.

To judge, they must look inside you and judge you then. This law would both limit unfair arrest and would give you a better view into yourself — also, you could prove yourself.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: To some extent, you describe how judges in traditional village or tribal communities ideally operate. For greater fairness than the judgment of men who fall short of this ideal, we have a system governed by law, not men. Yet, we have judges, not to mention juries — ideally, for the reasons you give.

I Know You

i know you feel me when i say

i ain't going out for nothing

i know you feel me when i say

if i feel threaten'd i'm get to bustin'

i know you feel me when i say

the streets of oakland is crazy

i know you feel me when i say

o p d is hella shady

i know you feel me when i say

it's the turf till my casket drop

i know you feel me when i say

i ain't 'bout to freeze

i'm runnin' till my breath stop

i know you feel me when i say

what i say

i know you feel me when i say

the white man ain't playing today

i know you feel me when i say

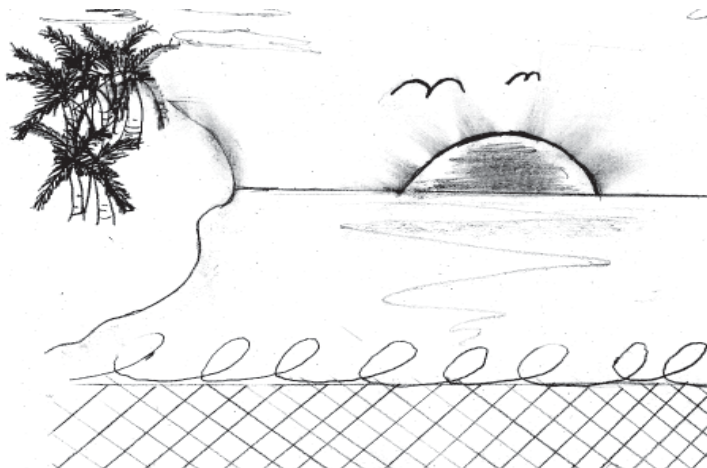
oakland should be in the world guinness

i know you feel me when i say

it's all 'bout business

-Hambone, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're writing this out of a dream, as if you were still living that life in the street. When you wake up, realize that the rules you just summarized got you nowhere but here. Isn't that clear?



**You know, I'm
really scared for
myself because I feel
something tragic in
my life is going to
have to happen in
order for me to
really wake up.**

You Got Me Crazy, Baby

every time i see you i love you more
 and when i kiss you i want you more
 your look alone makes me fall in love with you
 your words seduce me
 out of all the candies you're the sweetest
 my mind thinks about you day after day
 your naturalness and your humility
 got me in love with you
 you're the most beautiful woman
 you're the perfect woman
 out of all the stars in the sky you are the brightest
 in a garden you'd be the most beautiful rose
 and in my mouth you're the sweetest fruit
 you're the owner of my life and my spirit
 love — i hand to you my body and my spirit
 and i give to you my heart
 but i ask one thing from you
 that you continue giving me your love
 i love you danielle

-Danny Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're sure she's delighted to read your hyperbolic praise; it displays an enthusiasm that won't go away! Still, if you choose words from your own talk, it might sound even more like sentiments from your own heart.

There Ought to Be a Law

If I could make a law, I would really take advantage of it!
 I would make a law stating that all men with felonies,
 would still be able to get some of the good-paying jobs
 — instead of having to be on the street when they finally
 do get out of jail.

Because when men get out of jail, they do have the
 intention to go and get a job, but the law about having to
 admit on your job application that you've committed a
 felony, makes it hard to get a good job. And that makes
 them feel like failures.

So they go back to their bad ways, being on the streets,
 hustling, robbing, and stealing — which brings them
 right back to jail.

I would also make a law were the young men would
 be able to work somehow, too, instead of being led into
 that bad life.

-Lil' Dave, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maybe schools should not only teach trades, they should offer apprenticeships where you get paid. And perhaps there could be apprenticeship programs for felons after release; if they do well enough for long enough, their records (as far as employment) could be sealed. Thanks for explaining the need.

**They don't know the
 good that I have done.
 They don't know I've
 practically raised my
 little niece and nephew.**

I Pray to be Free

I hope I get out of this place, for I can be a
 basketball player. So I don't want to do no more
 time — but I guess that's how it's goin' here.

When I was thirteen years old, I was playing
 basketball and doing good on the team. So I just
 want a better life, and to be a man about it. So
 just help me, God! Oh my Lord, help me to be a
 man — a good man, a God's man.

But anyway, I don't want to be in here again.
 But God, I hope He do something right about
 this, He of all people — 'cause God know I didn't
 do it! So I just want to be a good man about
 myself. I don't want to be in here again. I will
 leave and never come back. And that's what I
 mean about that, you know.

So just help me, God! I just do right every
 day in here, but I just want the best for me, you
 know. I just call out to you, oh God! But I know
 that you will make it all right for me. So I will do
 my best when I get out of here. So bless me and
 my whole spirit.

So just be right, everyone. And do good by me,
 God. I will pray tonight for my freedom.

-Johnathan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're doing everything you can, taking it day by day, doing the best that you can. Let your prayers strengthen you, as you wait for the chance to prove that you can live a good as a free man. Focus on your school work, too. With your basketball skills and an education, even when you're done playing, you can coach a team. So hold on to your dreams.

**when men get out of
 jail, they do have the
 intention to go
 and get a job**

What Do You See?

What do you see? I can tell you what they see. They
 see just another statistic in a file or in the computer
 or whatever. They are waiting for me to just go back to
 the man-size cage.

They don't think of you as a rehabilitated person,
 but they think of it as just another link in the returning
 to jail or prison chain.

Yes they don't know the real Dre, they know the
 Dre on the piece of paper with all my crimes. They
 don't know the good that I have done. They don't know
 I've practically raised my little niece and nephew.

When they see me they don't acknowledge me as
 a human being living in society. They see me as a
 statistic living to reek chaos in society. So don't be
 ignorant and close-minded as them. Now, "what do
 you see?"

-Big Samoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Freedom is a privilege — not a right. Unfortunately, the authorities do not see the good you do — they only see the bad. We certainly see the good in you, but now you have to show the world you're trying to do good. Keep your mind right and keep your actions in check and you will break the chains of incarceration.

Loved One's Lost

What loved one's lost means to me is the people I grew up with and have been around all my life that have passed away over the years in this crazy city of Oakland, where people kill each other to earn a name for themselves on the streets.

Sometimes it is for money, sometimes it is for what people see as respect in their eyes, but it is all wrong in my eyes. 'Cause that respect and money can't go with you to the afterlife, where Godly people will go to heaven and the evil man of sin will go to hell, 'cause believe it or not — you have to answer to things you do. If it's not here on earth — it's at the gates of heaven where you will either walk in the gate or fall beneath it and everyone knows where that is.

This is to some of my loved ones lost to the game that didn't love them and don't love no one — rest in peace.

To my ninja Jay Jay who was shot and killed on December 31, 2003. I love you ninja and you will always have a place in my heart. We miss you down here James Jackson and even though you didn't get to see the new year — we saw it for you and brought it in for you, the right way and even though your not here in the flesh — I feel you're right by my side everyday and wanted to be, we love you ninja.

-Lil' Shann, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope that your friends haven't died in vain and we hope that you've learned a lesson from their deaths. How can you save yourself from a similar tragedy? Will the longing for a street name ever decrease or will folks always crave the fame? Where do you see Oakland in five or ten years? How about yourself in five or ten years?

What Do They See?

Now since I have been locked up for some time for the first time. There is no doubt in my mind that a few people who I know will look at me differently just because I've been in jail.

I guess everyone thought I was an innocent kid, but there is reasons why I've been heading down the road that I was. I think some people who find out or heard where I've been will probably fear a little of me just because I have been in a negative environment.

My oldest brother has lost some respect for me just because of where I am. Some people might think that I'm totally ignorant just because I wound up here. Little do they know some people in here come out smarter than when they came in.

My first step was try and get used to how things work in here. Everywhere I go I study my surroundings, and I try to learn as much as possible where I am.

-Jainesh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How can you can gain back some of the respect you've lost? Do you think that your family will ever look at you the same? We actually hope that you don't get used to the environment you're in. We hope you can handle it but don't get too accustomed. Make sure that you don't get institutionalized or too dependent and always remember that one day you will be free to make decisions of your own.

What Can I Say to My Victim?

If I would meet my victim's family, I wouldn't know what to say to them, 'cause I was wrong to do something to someone.

And if I could go back to the start, I would be in school trying to go to college, get a house, have a great job and have my own kids.

I'd teach them going to juvenile hall is not the place to be at. 'Cause some kids might not like you, some will beat you up or get you killed, on the inside or the outside. I might say to my victim — me and you were out at the wrong time! And my victim should have had his store closed. If so, I would/could have went to my girlfriend's house to stay with her, and I would not be here writing The Beat while I'm doing my time.

I don't think my victim forgives me. But if I was the victim, I would — because young kids these days don't be knowing what they be doing! If they was with some grown-up's, an older person wouldn't have told them it's okay to rob somebody.

I would like to write a letter to my victim's family, because you can say more in a letter than you can face to face — 'cause you might say the wrong thing to somebody. You never know, they might forgive you. But if they don't forgive you, you will have to live with that memory for the rest of your life.

-Kevin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a mistake to blame the victim for being open late. Even if he was taking a risk, robbing him is on you not him. But it seems like you know that now. And yes, a generation is being raised in the street, with no meaningful adult guidance. Young fools out there telling each other, "Rob him!" And you did. So how can you make amends? If you follow through on getting an education and a job, then raising your children with proper adult supervision; well, it doesn't undo what you did, but you'll be doing your part to make a better world for everyone.

I Love You All

i love it when my family comes to visit me
i love it when i see my daughter smile
i love it when i talk to my future wife on the phone
i love it when i hear her beautiful voice
i love it when i see my sister come visit
even though we have our up's and down's
i just love it when i'm free
i love it when i'm able to just lay in bed
with my future wife and our daughter
this is to my mom, dad, sister, future wife
and my daughter — thank you
for coming here to visit me
i love you all

-Matt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you wrote your "victim piece" this week, you left yourself off the list of victims. Yet you have so clearly also hurt yourself! Can you follow the example of these family members, whom you put on your list? Despite their pain, they show their love to you every chance they get. Stay strong.

**Everywhere I go I study my surroundings,
and I try to learn as much as possible**

Things You Need to Know

Do you know things you should do instead of hurting someone? — Talk about how you feel, tell him or her to leave you alone.

But people don't understand what you talkin' about, so they take things to another level and wanna fight and wanna shoot people, threatenin' people, telling them they gonna kill you. But they don't know what they be gettin' into with us ninjas; these fools don't know what they are gettin' into with certain people.

But me, I am a cool person. So I just look over petty little things, and I pray for them. If that don't work, I don't know what to tell you besides: Go to church! And also tell yourself if you do the crime, you pay the time!

It don't mean you are being a punk. Do what I do — you know you can beat his or her best stuff, so just walk away. I don't trip off of people, 'cause I am a black belt and I know I can beat you at fighting. So, you see, Hk don't go there! It would be a problem for you, and a problem you don't need — with me!

-Hk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We respect the advice you give and even more that you live it. The more tools you have, the better. Try one tool, and if that doesn't help, try another. And if you can't figure out what to say or do, don't do anything — just walk away. Then let yourself chill when it's all passed. If they see you chill, they know their words instill no fear in you. And it's over.

What I Want To Do When I Get Out

I'm going to work and continue the things I was doing like keep going to Omega, I'm not gone be on the streets at all, I'm go play activities with my little brother and sister, and do more positive things,

I'm already taking my GED. I hope to pass it if I get out. I'm taking it in October and November and after that, the person that teaches me is getting me in an auto mechanic job that I hope I can be successful in. His name is Jimmy and he's a good person. He really motivates my mind on doing good.

-Tyrelle B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Sometimes having a friend like Jimmy looking out for you spells the difference between success and failure. Good luck on your taking your GED!

Tryin' To Change My Ways

I am tryin' to change my ways, because I need to be there for my son — and show him the right way.

I can show him that I've been locked up for a long time, and I know jail ain't cool! And I know I'm going to get out of jail and look for a job, so I can be a daddy to my son — and show him he don't have to be on these streets for nothing.

Because these streets don't lead to nothing but being in jail for life! Or being dead somewhere! And I don't want my son to end up like that.

So I need to do what I got to do, so I can get out and be there! So he won't end up like that. And I pray every night and ask God to forgive.

-Shady Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Start here and now to change what you do and how. Change the way you think and what you say. Change how you behave when someone gets in your face. We're not saying you should cave, but you don't need to wait to change. Start making yourself into the man your son needs to have for his dad. And you'll feel God's forgiveness, every day you live this!

Perpetrator To Victim

It's hard for me to write on this topic, but I can say I know a couple of individuals who were victims, but in the end turned out to be perpetrators.

My message is to people who take assertiveness for weakness or quietness for weakness. Don't think you can go through life judging people by appearances, because it's going to be that one person you mess with, and you're going to be in for a hell of a surprise.

Look at it like this. You woke up this morning thinking that you're gonna make a come up, catch someone slipping and try to take their shhh. Then you end up being in the victim's position, and now you're begging for your life and you're thinking "Lord, please help me get through this predicament. I don't wanna die like this. I wanna have kids, raise a family. Lord, I really don't wanna live like this 'cause I'm an honor student with a great heart. Please help me." All of this because you underestimated the wrong person, and now you went from the perpetrator to the victim, and you may possibly be a victim of crime.

Word to the wise, keep your eyes on the prize. Stay up and get your weight up, and if you wanna change and peer pressure won't let you because you're scared, ask the Lord for guidance.

-Afro B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: True, never take kindness from weakness and never judge people by their appearance. We shouldn't judge people in the first place. Has something like this happened to you or to people you know? Have you asked the Lord for guidance? Did you get it?

The Law In My Heart

the law i would make
would have to be great
for everybody not to be afraid
no matter what color or shade
my law is for my victim not to be afraid
it was a mistake that day i made
would you forgive me for that mistake
at least i asked before it was too late

-Young Zoe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This one short poem, says more about knowing right from wrong (and how to start making right what you did wrong) than any law based on fear and enforced by the strong-armed tactics of the fractious!

**my law is for my
victim not to
be afraid
it was a mistake
that day i made**

Court Today

I went to court today and I was supposed to get out. The DA who had my case went on vacation so there was a substitute DA. He said he wasn't ready, so now they moved me back a month later. To me that's unfair. Just because someone wanted to go on vacation, I'm being punished and I got to stay in here longer than I should have.

It's unfair how they can mess with your life and do whatever they want with you. They've kept me in here for too long and I've learned my lesson. Fo' real though, I ain't coming back. Most people say that when they leave and they change for a while but sooner or later they put themselves in the wrong position and they think they can get away with whatever they're doing wrong, but really you can't.

It's impossible to do dirt and have no dirt come back to you. Once you realize that life watches everything you do and every action you make, a seed is planted for an effect on your life, then you're ready to know how you want to live your life — either a positive outcome or a negative outcome.

I believe that when you die you wake up reborn again and all your karma that you in your past life comes with you in your new life. That explains why people are born into different circumstances such as rich or poor. It's all about your actions. If they're positive you'll sooner or later live a good life.

-Jue B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, it is unfair that you are being punished just because the DA is on vacation. The ugly truth is that there are many things in this life that are unfair, and there's little we can do about most of them. What we can do, though, is work on ourselves. Turn that unfair extra time into something positive by getting things together and really planning out what you are going to do when you get out. We hope you keep your words, because a lot of people have said they are not coming back but end up back in a short period of time. Is your belief in reincarnation based on Buddhism, or is it just the way you believe?

**It's impossible to do dirt and
have no dirt come back to you.**

I Love Me

i love it when i get to go home
instead of going to a group home
i love it when i hear my lil' brother
is back with our mother
and next it will be me
i love it when i have a chance
and an opportunity to go back to georgia
i love it when i hear my grandmother say
she wants me on electric monitoring
at her house instead of at my dad's
i love it when i get to see another day of life
i love it when i am free
i love my family and i love me
i love it when i see good things happening to me
i loved it when i heard that the punk
that killed my cousin harold
got caught

-Trenell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad he got caught, too, before someone in your family played the fool seeking revenge — the killing cycle needs to end! And we're very glad that things are looking better for you and for your little brother, too. That's way coo!

My Mother and I: Both Victims

My mother and I, we're both victims. We both hit each other! So the way I would explain — it's like a boomerang, a victimizing situation.

But when something happens, I forget some of it; and I'm just now remembering that my mom hit me first. But all I remembered when the police talked to me was my physically abusing her. So now it's my fault that I'm in here, because I told the cops only what I remembered feeling — but what I remembered to tell them was not the whole story at all!

And I have so many problems and disorders. I used to hate myself for all the medications my therapist put me on. And I hated myself for how I'd been placed in five mental institutions — just because I wasn't a very diplomatic person!

I didn't know people in Arkansas would pick so many fights, and every time I tried to be strong — they'd raise a hand at me. So I'd feel like I had to beat them down. And I'd get in trouble when I'd fight back.

And it doesn't help any, not at all, when I go to class here — and people talk about me:

day in and day out
at you i want to shout
quit abusing me
and back the what down
you've been devilish to me
but you have so many issues
and you're too blind to see
day in and day out
you make me want to shout
quit abusing me
and back the what down

-Gloria, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Beat readers will understand exactly how you feel — but the truth is, you're powerless over what the next person does or doesn't do; unless you beat them down — and that just makes everything worse for you! So you need to focus in on you and what you do. Learn to put your anger into words and on the page let your feelings rage — but keep your hands at your sides and you'll be all right. Keep hope alive!

My Victim / My Enemy

my victim is the streets
because it took my friend's life away
i have no remorse toward my victim
i have no remorse at all for the streets
it took a good person away
ever since then stuff been crazy nowadays
but i'm gone end
with — rest in peace my friend
snoopy —

-Droopy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you can stay clear that your enemy is the street, and turn your life away from all the games people play to bring grief and heat. Well, that revenge would be sweet!

**i love it when i have
a chance
and an opportunity**

I Feel Alone

man i can't breathe
i keep thinking about what i need
all i want to do is succeed
well the judge let me out
all this mess makes me need to shout
i can't stand the way you look at me
just because i am not free
probation recommends me home
in all this time i feel alone
all i want is to see the stars
and not from behind these bars
why'd i have to steal them cars
if they send me back to rehab
i'll go off the hook and be bad
all these years it's been about the crys[tal]
i'm going to end up getting pissed
send me home
so i'm not alone

-Mary Poppins, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You can't hold onto your life and the meth pipe at the same time. Rehab's no fun, but go back to the pipe and your freedom's done! It's not even freedom, it's an illusion — you're a slave, headed for the grave, until you quit doin' crys'. Now you can get pissed or you can listen to this (or both).

It's Messed Up

I'm sittin' in Juvenile, waitin' on my sentence to CYA; but I don't think I really deserve it. I ran from Camp two times, an' now I just got caught for my warrant — no new case! But the judge ain't tryin'a give me another chance.

I really don't think it's fair at all, 'cause I see hella ninjas gettin' all these placement releases — an' they' runnin'! Then the judge give 'em chance after chance. That ain't coo'!

I really gotta try to talk to the DA, so I can go back to court an' try to see a different judge. 'Cause I know another judge would be easier on me, an' he would see that I really don't deserve it.

Through whatever I go through, I'm gon' keep the faith an' be strong; keep my head high! I got faith that God gon' change my sentence an' I'm gon' be out of here soon, hopefully. But if not, I'm gon' accept this time like I'm supposed to, no matter what feeling's I've got — I'm gon' get through!

So to everybody about to do some time, or goin' home — stay strong! And change yo' ways 'fore you be in my situation, or worse.

-Lil' Wody, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We wish we could put your piece in a time capsule and send it back for you to read before you ran from Camp that second time, or mail it home so you could have turned yourself in before getting caught up on the warrant. You sound as if you'd finish your program at Camp now, no matter what, if you could only get that one last chance. We hope it happens. But if it is the Y, do a good program there and get an earlier release. Then when you do go free, stay free — 'cause that's the real key!

i love it ...

i love the life i live
i don't love the way i live it
been through so much
dat i don't know where to begin it
in this game to win it
with my eyes on the prize
unaware of an unexpected surprise
witnessed homicides
blood spilt right before my eyes
in the event of my demise...
i must defend myself with the nice-guy disguise
to rise above the insanity
i love it when i'm high
but i love my sanity
so now i flirt with sobriety
i love an adrenaline rush
but the outcome of it is seeing more blood gush
feeling as if a constant grey cloud is hanging over me
but it's only because of the depressions of reality
but i will survive physically
but that is to only be strong mentally
so much hate influence our minds young
growing walking around packing a gun
before it was fun
but now it's dumb
the dope smoke i constantly consumed
made me numb
to stare in the eyes of a lifeless body was trivial to me
just another common day-to-day casualty
inside it feels as if some' is stabbing me rapidly
but outside everything is fine
like i said before
i love the life i live
but i don't love the way i live it
i love it ...

-Ben, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Trying on the nice-guy disguise, does indeed help you rise above the stress. So we'll say, "Fake it till you make it out of this mess." But then don't just drop it like yesterday's news, 'cause it sounds like you're discovering some permanent clues about what used to be true about you and is no more. For that stabbing pain, there is no cure, but there is a treatment to heal it; and it's not going numb and acting dumb — that just guarantees you'll feel it forever. Stay sober, stay wise; it's better than clever. You're already halfway to the other side of stuck — you know, the side that wins (and it's not just luck). Stay up!

I Love When I Love Life

i love it when i sleep good
i love it when i wake up in a good mood
i love it when i can get a fifteen minute shower
i love it when i can have my dog wakes me up with a kiss
i love it when i can race my bike
i love it when i can eat healthy food
i love it when i live life how it should be lived — free
i love it when i can talk to my mom without other people listening
i love it when the time goes by on my watch
i love it when i have a choice
i love it when i don't hear a click when i go to my room
i love it when i have the will to live
i love it when i have the will to fight
i love it when i don't have to have other people decide my fate
i love it when the cops have to look for me not just a key and my room

-Brent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Love it more when the cops have no reason to look for you. Love it more when you make the right choice. Love it more when you're living free and responsibly. And don't give up the fight to get your life right, 'cause you deserve to live free in the light!

Love It When I'm Free

i love it when i'm free
i love it when i ain't on the run
and i'm legit
and able to kick it
without worrying about
the cops and shhh
i love it when i'm with family
and some of them ain't scared
to come around me
because i'm on the run
i love it when i'm able to kick it
with my homies on the block
or wherever we're at
i love it when i ain't got
nobody on my back
i love it when i ain't stressin' hella much
i love it when i don't have to hustle
and do dirt to get cash
i'm gonna love it hella much
when i'm free
stay up

-Crazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're teaching by telling the plain truth. Most readers will feel just like you if they're honest with themselves — 'cause life on the run is less fun than living hell. And the only thing that lasts of all that hustle and dirt for cash, is the stress! And it won't let you rest 'cause of the mess you made trying to get paid. Now you know how to be free, get paid legitimately.

I Figured Out Who I Am and What I Want

'Sup! This is your boy, Bizzy, from Hayward. I'm tired of being institutionalized. I think I'm ready for a change. I'm about to be eighteen. It's time to act like a man, feel me.

I wanna go home to see my family. I want a job. I want freedom — we all do! Be real with yourself: what do you want in life? Just because you're with your boys, doesn't mean you have to change up. Your real folks will like you for who you really are.

Stand up for what you believe in. Don't front. You don't have to be loud or talk trash for respect or to be noticed. Most of those loud, trash-talkin' cats are just "lames lookin' for names"! Give respect, get respect — and karma's a beeotch!

How do you want to live the rest of your life? Behind bars? Or sittin' with your wifey and kids, watchin' the Chappelles' Show! You dig?

-Bizzy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're serving the real to anyone who's ready to deal with straight truth. But you need to do more than think you might be ready to change — you've got to make a firm decision. Then, having made that decision, it's up to you to follow through. There will be bad days and good, but you knew you could, once you made up your mind to really give it a try. Props!

**How do you want to
live the rest of your
life? Behind bars?**

I Want to Say

i love it when i get what i want
i love it when i'm kickin' it
with the homeboys and we soak 'em
i love it when i wake up in the morning
and realize that god let me live another day
i love it when i'm with my lady
i love it when i go to sleep and night
and that i'm blessed to have a place to sleep
i hate it when i argue with my parents
but i love it that they stand by me no matter what
i hate it that i'm locked up
but i love it that i will get out soon
till that day i will hate the fact that i have to be told
when and what time i could come out of my room
i love it when the homies are doing
something good to better their lives
i want to say what's up to all in the hall and at camp
till next time stay up and pimp the system

-Fat Juan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Everybody loves it when they get what they want, but the real deal is to have an educated heart — so you want what's good for you and for those you love, too, right from the start. So tell the truth, is your heart learning or just burning?

For My Country

maybe the only way
to change my ways
is join the u-s armed forces
or the law enforcement
become one of the people
i hated most — a police officer
that would be the way
to give back to society
i want to join the army or marine corps
if i get off probation and seal my record
i will be able to do that
i would like to be honored to
fight for my country
i would rather die fighting
for my country than hit
by a stray bullet

-David, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is an admirable ideal, to give back to society. We're proud of you for setting the goal of getting off probation, sealing your record, and seeking to serve and protect.

To Those Whom

to those whom i sold drugs
to those whom i robbed
to those whom i fought
to those whom i put down
to those whom i disrespected
this one is for you —
i'm sorry because now
that i think about it
i would not want no one
to do that to my family

-Lil' June, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Keep that realization at the center of heart and mind, then whatever your future holds — and you'll do fine!

My Story

This is coming from me, that always had it hard, wondering when I would get beyond these walls. Instead of standing on a corner waiting for the law to knock me off. I had people predicting my life when I get beyond these walls, saying we know you sure fall.

My goal is to prove to myself, and my family, that I can (fly) beyond the state's prison walls.

-T-Boo, Virginia

From The Beat: You seem to have a positive direction for the future, but how it all turns out will depend on the daily choices you make for yourself—not on what others say or think. Others can predict for you all they want, but in the most crucial choices you make you will be the “decider,” the man truly in charge. Will you have the understanding and self-discipline that you need to meet these challenges?

**When they got by me,
they stopped the car
and hopped out and
they didn't ask me my
name or was I on any
paper work, they just
grabbed my neck and
start beating my ass**

My Mom Is A Blindfold

Living in a closed life

Sheltered by your mom's arms to protect you

From what the real world is like

Keeping you so sheltered

That she won't even reveal your dad's everyday 'career' to you

Always wondering

About what my grandma would be preaching to my mom

To make her cry

So as I grow and experience the true world

I wish, I could have my wings to shelter me

But I know she can't be with me everyday

So I'll just have to learn and experience

But the only thing I wish my mother would've done was

Put a blindfold over my eyes

About life

Just keep it real with your seed.

To be continued...

-Dominique Marie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maybe a blindfold isn't the answer. You've had a sheltered life, and the truth hurts. But, you can't choose to not see the problems that life brings you. But, you can decide how you are going to see these obstacles. Are they going to take you down? Or are they going to make you stronger? Are they going to take control of your life, or are they going to empower you. The bravest thing that we can do is open our eyes. And always remember, you get to decide which direction to look.

Lovin' It

I love it when things go good for me.

I love it when my family comes up to visit me whenever they can.

I love it when I'm out these county blues and on them streets of Oakland, soakin' and smokin'.

I love it when my body and her body are both together under the sheets all soaked up with sweat

I love every moment of summer when the suns up and it's hot as hell

I love it when we hit up Great America and be ready to live it up 'cause we done drank up the whole fifth.

I love it when we be out on the late night hype ridin' back to back in our Scrapers and 'Stangs and 'Maros swangin' 'em, hot boxin', hittin' up them tele-parties and kicking it with them sexy females.

I love it when I get to holla at my brothers that are locked up as well, to see how they are holding up and when they getting out.

I love it when they hit me up with my release date one more time

-Lil' John, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sounds like everything you love is out there in the free world. What made you risk losing it all? How does your family feel knowing that all the brothers are locked up? Now, we want to know is — what's more important to you — the kicking it with your homies or your family at home who comes and visits you all the time? Wake up!

Victim

I am a victim of the streets 'cause everywhere I go when I am in the street there is police looking for victim to put dope on or to beat up or just to mess with. You can be walking down the street in a non drug area and the police will still mess with you just 'cause they can.

One time I was walking down the street and two police were driving down and they saw me walking all by myself — not with hella people making hella noise not messing with people, not doing anything to anyone just minding my own business and leaving them alone.

When they got by me, they stopped the car and hopped out and they didn't ask me my name or was I on any paper work, they just grabbed my neck and start beating my ass and that is why they both got fired and I am paid for every blow they threw.

I get a dollar mo' and they thought I was playing when I said that but now they know.

-Lil' Shann, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's unfortunate that we hear so many stories about crooked cops who abuse their power. We're glad that they were fired and that you were paid for your pain and suffering. Have you ever ran across a good cop? Do you have any stories about good cops? If you were a cop, what kind of cop would you be?

**My goal is to prove to
myself, and my family,
that I can (fly) beyond
the state's prison walls.**

Outlaw Abortions

If I could make and pass a law and I did not have to have the approval of legislature, the law would be to outlaw abortions of any kind. I have several reasons for choosing to add this law. My first, and I suppose most pertinent reason is that, although pro-abortion activists say that the mother has the right to choose if she has an abortion or not, the plain and simple fact is that she is killing her child. My secondary reason is that I believe in freedom of choice, but not just for the mother. I believe the baby should be able to choose if it lives or dies.

-Katrina GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very well written piece, and we appreciate you sharing your perspective. We know lots of folks will agree. We do have some questions though. Why do you believe that abortion is killing? Do you believe life begins at the moment of conception? Second, before a fetus leaves the body of the mother, can it make a choice, does it know what life or death is, or do you feel that it showed what it's desire was when it was fertilized? Would you also outlaw abortions for women who were raped?

This Is How I Love

I love it when I am free to do whatever I want.
This is how I love it when I am free to speak my mind without being locked up for it.
I love it when I can listen to whatever I want, whenever I want, this is how I love it when I don't have to listen to authority at all times.
I love it when I can go to school without being watched every second of the day.
This is how I love it when I can finally actually be black and proud.
This is how I love it.

To die today is to live free tomorrow!

-Lil Jepeabo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What? We don't really understand. Oh okay, we get it; free to do whatever you want. But, what do you mean "To die today is to live free tomorrow"? You need to explain that a little more clearly, maybe in your next piece -yeah?

**give good
influence on
your kid or
family member
so they will not
choose the wrong
route and suffer
consequences that
you suffered or is
already suffering**

The Victims of Society

My victim is people of the society who will not want to make a change because of their lifestyle.

My lifestyle was not always as good as well as bad. It was always told that the choices that I made, bad or good will always come back on me. I wasn't too sure about that. So, I did both mostly bad, but it's true.

Now that I see where it could get me, but what I think is my life is valuable as my future. When I have kids I don't want to see them in jail or hurt themselves or others. But it's just as me being an older brother influencing my younger brother or sister it all reflects on your lifestyle you live.

Just give perfect examples of an influence and I'm pretty sure they will keep it in mind and run with it.

So my victim is society of people who peer pressure you, who can kill you and who can hurt your family. So give good influence on your kid or family member so they will not choose the wrong route and suffer consequences that you suffered or is already suffering. That's all I got I'm out.

-Lil Ew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lil Ew, you're on the right track. If people decide to continue with their destructive behavior, then they are not only hurting themselves, but others as well. Don't be a victim, be a hero.

I Love It When . . .

I love it when the wind blows right and not left.

I love it when I know that I'm right and some think that I'm wrong.

I love it when love is true love and not the animated love.

I love it when black people can step in the name of love.

I love it when ninjas is so gangsta that they can beat my ass, and I love it when I tell them to stick a cork in it.

And I love it when things is so good that I can fly

And I love it when I feel so good that I can walk on water.

That what I love most.

-Cuttey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great imagination! You sound like a happy guy; You love how the wind blows to lovin' when getting yo' ass beat. Is this what you really meant? We wish that we were all as luck to enjoy life with this great attitude!

**my
victim
is
society**

J-Boogie And Imay's Page

I've Got Sunshine

So many things make me glow,
Like the vibrant peaceful way my life is starting to flow,
Or the way the day opens and closes,
And sometimes the smell of freshly blossomed pink and red roses.
Life is a very enjoyable experience to go through,
From the moment your mother gives birth till the day someone buries you.
Going through life looking at the positives can establish a sense of peace and harmony,
It could make you think of all material things as a second priority,
But I've got sunshine in my life,
I feel like nothing can go wrong, things can only go right,
So when I get out I'm gonna get mine,
And continue to let the sunshine shine!

-J-Boogie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Shine! Shine! Shine! You make us glow, the way you flow, with your rhymes. Nice writing! It's about time, that you got - your sunshine.

I'm So Sorry

I'm so sorry for all the trouble, sorrow, hurt, and
problems I've caused.
I didn't mean to,
it's my human nature to sin,
to be bad;
to do what's wrong
rather than what's right.
So please accept my apology,
I truly mean it
with all my heart when I say I'm so, so sorry.

-J Boogie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: J, you write with sincerity. But ya' know, the best way to apologize, to show regret, is by changing your behavior. It is certainly NOT human nature to be bad. But, sometimes, it is all we know. Learn something new! Change your nature. All it takes is time, which is usually followed by forgiveness.

My Childhood Is Gone

I have a month left
It's like I want to cry for me
The child inside of me
It hurts inside
I got to move
Basically my family's let me go
Like my mom
We're both in jail for the same thing
We can't play the game we used to
All the times we shared
As little ones following the leader
And now we are bigger and now it is time to lead
They say a child will lead us to glory
But that child has yet to come,
At times I have to wonder am I the chosen one.
How can I lead a pack and can barely lead myself?
But we are the children
We are all we have left
We all we got!

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Soon, you will legally be an adult and you'll have to start making choices for yourself. You can no longer play games and take gambles with your life unless you're ready to lose your life to the system. How can you make a better future for yourself? How can you make the future of the children of the next generation a bright one? Or maybe you can be a role model for your mother. Good luck.

Speak To Me

Teardrops fall for every child born in the struggle,
Living to survive no guidance of a mother
Blood shed for the pain inside
To know you have a father but never looked in his eyes
People fall from being led astray
we've been taught this but expected to go another way
what we learn is what we see
speak to me
Listen to my mind
the words that I speak
listen to my emotions
before you choose to judge me
You give me a gun cocked back and on fire
You look into my eyes and they glisten with desire
You dare me to do it and when I do it...
It's me that's dead
But no one tried to stop us till we bled and bled
But we can only throw up the food we're fed

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man girl, your poetry is getting better with each word you write. Your last two lines are hella tight. If you start eating different food, and start surrounding yourself with better eating utensils, do you think that you might digest your food instead of regurgitating it?

**Like my mom
We're both in jail
for the same thing
We can't play the
game we used to**

Mary Poppins And Gypsy's Page

The Next Month

For the next month I'll be locked up
The month after that I'll be locked up
I'm trying to go home
I can't stand being alone
Will the judge let me
Probation hear my plea
I don't want to be yanked
And this time around I'm gonna quit crank
If they let me go home that is
If not I'ma stay smokin' that pizz
I'm crazy in the head
Sometimes I wanna be dead
But check this
I miss my man's kiss
I'm going home
No more being alone
(Me and my man Bonnie and Clyde)

-Mary Poppins, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Even if the judge doesn't let you go home, you should still think about getting clean. Is going back to the "pizz" somehow a way to punish the system for holding you? That's like biting your nose to spite your mouth. You're still losing in the end. It's about you — not the system. The system is going to keep locking you up if you keep using — and that will never change. So it's on you to be the one to change.

The Day I Came In

It was like a dream
All I wanted to do was scream
For months I knew the day was coming
But I just kept along humming
I said my last words to my man
"I'm coming home. I'm doing all I can"
The stuff I go through for this crystal
Damn this shhh is making me pissed
When I slammed
It gave me hope
But really it was all about the dope
Smokin' crys'
I miss my sis
I'm confused
This dope has me used and abused
I'm back in here stuck in fear
Can I go home?
I'm feeling alone
I pinch myself; I'm awake
My future is at stake
It's on me
What I make

-Mary Poppins, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We really hope that this time you're leaving crystal for good. You know deep down inside you really should. You've said your goodbyes in the past, but those promises you made to yourself did not last. It's gonna be hard to kiss crys' goodbye, but if you want it bad enough — it is worth giving it a try. Where do you see yourself five years from now if you keep using? If you get clean, does your future look better?

Crank

As of today
I hate crank
It made my eyes blank
I don't know who to thank
But my arms are scarred
And I'm behind bars
Smoking dope
Gave me phony hope
Clouds and Clouds and Clouds
Of smoke
You know what I see in my
Head?
Needles and dope
Needles and dope
Pizz's and crys'
Pizz's and crys'
Someone help me
I scream and no one can hear
Relieve me of my addiction
I wish this was all fiction

-Mary Poppins, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Unfortunately, addiction is something that will not go away overnight. We know you are a strong woman and if you put forth enough of your precious energy to quitting — it will happen. You have to tell yourself over and over: "There is nothing stronger than me." By telling yourself this, you will be more confident in overcoming your addiction.

What's Up Beat?

What's up Beat! I am back. But this time I turned myself in. I'm going to try to go home instead of a rehab. It's been a while so forgive me...

-Mary Poppins, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Taking responsibility is the first step, next is addressing your issues and working on them. We're pulling for you.

The Perfect Crime

To me there is no perfect crime, because you will always get caught no matter what.

But, if there was, I'd say, you'll really need the money. Like, to feed your kids or something. I say do what you got to do. See when it comes to the family do what you got to do.

My best crime is to talk to people and get them to do what I want to do. Talking is my hustle; I can never fail at that. Like they said in the movie Tony Montana, "The world is not enough! I will take it all!"

-Gypsy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Gypsy, come on now! We agree with you when you say -to do what you gotta do; BUT, why does your "talk" have to be a crime? Why can't you use your powers for good, rather than evil? You should be smarter than that. You wanna talk movies? Well, everyone loves the good-guy character, and everyone knows what happens to the bad guy. Now which guy do you wanna be? The alive guy, or the dead guy?

My Victim

My victim, I did feel sorry for him, but sooner or later someone else would get him. So really and truly I say, if you look for it, you get it. The way I think, the whole thing feels pretty bad.

But I needed the money, so I took it. I made the choice, so now here I am, and the victim is out there waiting for another person to take him again.

I have no more feelings for the dude. But I hold no grudge, and if I could do it again, guess what, I would! But different. I'd get the cash and be gone. But, that is that, can you feel me?

-Gypsy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Gypsy, how would you feel if someone took your money? Money you worked for? We're not talking about money you've stolen, but money you've worked hard for. What if someone stole from one of your family members? Then what? Would you have the same attitude? You know that you feel bad about it, so tell us - Why? Why do you say that you would still do it over? What do you feel bad about - being in the Hall?

Eric's Page

The Best Of All The Rest

Most mentally
 Spiritual haven
 Thoughts of guilt to fault
 But really took that walk
 Down a long steep road of chalk
 To penetrate my knowledge I bought
 But get the soft like Posturepedic mats that talk
 Get the money
 Buy the honey
 Coated from cold snow bunny
 Melted reaction
 Heat from sun
 Not my son too unborn
 to be one
 What's the thought of airless lungs?
 Filled with smoke from burnt roast
 Brake and fast coast on tracks
 To connect the fact to bounce back
 To the same old track
 Got plaques
 To stick to the back of the maps
 I hold 'em all
 Lick super trained Pokemon packs
 Work together to have backs
 Got mine have yours flashbacks
 No trade back so get the thought of that fact
 A none opinion two dimension superstition
 Out within big mentions
 Walk through start to glancin'
 To good fashion or materialistic gaspin'
 For wear upon folk to sport the best warmth my chest
 The feelin' of it's the best of all the rest

-Eric, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have a lot of random thoughts in this poem. You have an excellent use of rhyme as well. As we were reading it, we saw some ideas we didn't understand but there is an old saying that states: the best poetry is the kind most people don't understand. Tell us, so we can better understand what these words mean to you. Keep up the good work!

My Name Is Eric

I've been on the streets enough to know about drug-dealers, murders and W. Bush sending people to war, robbers, the police and pimps, etc.

It's a cold world, people will hate me just as late back in the past, they hated Jesus Christ, enough to crucify him.

It's a sad tragedy to know the world is evaluated by money and materialistic things.

The way people act is all a reflection of the way they were growing up and if that person never had the life he or she ever wanted.

It's hatred to people that don't have what the other never had, but it's all out of controversy of the pain that people share with each other in different ways, sometimes killings, rapes and other society to the ones they claim

Our people, folks, homies, family, whatever the hell it means, it don't mean peace or priority cause it's all out of controversy.

I don't know whether I'm living in hell or heaven
 I know what it's like to be saved, but it's like when I see the light and walk towards it someone else sees me and tries to pull me away from being the person they always wanted to be.

Like being rich, you can't say you don't hate me, the world is surrounded by hatred. Don't hate on me, hate the hate of yourself and the lifestyle you living, 'cause the next person's lifestyle is a blessing that was given. And to live it, you can't hate on the next, 'cause the next gone hate on you, real talk.

Be yourself and it's always good to help, 'cause at the end you are by yourself all over again, in the world of hatred and pain.

-Eric, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We believe that the world is what you make it. The world is "evaluated by money and materialistic things" only if we, the people of the world choose this perspective. As residents of this world, we have a social responsibility to acknowledge all these things. Sure, hatred, jealousy, materialism and corruption exist in our world. But it is important that we recognize that these are not permanent characteristics of our world. We have the power to change these things. What kind of world do you want to live in? What qualities do you think are important in a society? Peace? Love? Community? Share with us in your next piece your ideal world.

The Law I Would Make

If Lil' E was to make a law, should it be to pop "E"s to get high
 just because my name starts with an E?
 And it feels good, and the way to be?

If Lil' E was to make a law, would it be to set the prisoners free,
 after every nasty meal they eat?
 Just 'cause the place they're at, is not the place to be?

If Lil' E was to make a law would it be that the teachers get higher
 salaries
 than the judge gets?
 For the fact that they teach and not to lock them up
 so that they would be able to express their feelings to The Beat

If Lil' E was to make a law, would it be everyone just accept me for me?
 Or if not they should be forced to get chained, hung, slaughtered
 like a beast
 Just 'cause they didn't respect me?

I think, Lil' E should make a law to fight for their family,
 than to kill or die for a country
 who doesn't know the definition or priority of peace
 and to respect the one who gives birth to Lil' E
 Meaning -- the mother of a living human being,
 that's what I would do
 so I can live in peace.
 Never mind the bad part.

I'm E, not a beast who doesn't live in peace.

-Eric, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Okay E, we feel ya! These sound like some nice positive laws, except for the poppin "E" law. How about everyone has to eat EGGS, or has to be nice to ELEPHANTS? What do you think? - Anyhow, you got our vote!

Mama Never Changed

I think my mother loves me the same
 but the game only loved me for my fame or life frame.
 It was weird I'm very thankful for my brother,
 sister, and peers.

I've been thinking why is it me who's a leader make
 mistakes and could it be

I'm too curious of the living being life
 of society or a sense of earth variety.

I think it's a big reason why
 things happen or change in my life

I've prayed and repented for them but some people
 look at me different like

I'm a menace to society and I'm not.

It's like I'm confused in a nappy knot of unhappy plots
 But I'm strong and I'm not what they think I am

But at least they know

it's not everyone that's the same

And my mom never changed to look at me the same as
 society may look at me

But I love her to death and I just want to say I would
 never give up

And it will come to a conclusion where it's going to be
 me and only me

Who can run my life.

-Eric, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You mother has a lot of love for you and a lot of faith in you. How can you repay her for the love she has shown you? Why don't you send her this poem? It would sure bring a smile to her face, especially in these times. Do you always want to be labeled or viewed as a menace to society? Do you want to change your ways? Do you always want to play the game? Where has the game taken you so far? And if you keep playing — do you think you might hit a dead end soon? What do you need to do so that you can gain some control over your life?

D-Minus And Black Majik's Page

Before . . . After . . .

Before my life became a dark, distorted, twisted picture I was a whole person. My life consisted of fun, laughter, and love. My family life was complete and full of unity.

I can remember every Sunday we all went to church and following was a big brunch at some nice restaurant, or sometimes it was a good home-cooked meal. Everything seemed perfect. School was going great at the time and I was making my parents proud. Everything was going great until recently.

In October of 2003 my family decided to make a move from Las Vegas to Pleasanton, CA.

From there, there were many changes in my life such as new school to new friends. Unfortunately coming from an urban lifestyle life was different and uncomfortable. I fell in with the wrong crowd; I started not going to school and took up a life of crime that ranged from drugs to fraud. With that, and poor decision making I ended up in the Hall, where now I am thinking of the new reconstruction of my life and how to be a civilized, decent person in today's society.

-D-Minus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow D! You sound like you're taking some good advice from someone. This transformation that you are going through, sounds promising. How are you going to do it? What is your plan? Life in the Hall makes it easy not to break any laws because you are under constant supervision. How do you plan to find this discipline on the outs?

Too Much Weight Part One

How many times I felt hopeless no one on my side
Only critics, mother visits my future in prison.

My accomplishments mean shhh to society

They conclude I'm a menace.

My crime file's my life's diary.

How am I supposed to succeed

Wit' ten life miseries on my shoulder?

I'm da person not tha paper in the manila folder.

Every time I'm in my cell I dream of my freedom,

It's da wish, one wish I'm flending.

I be day dreamin' if I go to hell or God's kingdom

You in jail once yo' parents climax and spurt that evil semen.

To tha DA I'm just a hazardous chemical,

Dispose of me before I affect the community

At different intervals

Like 180 decibels of dynamite

My future and myself I need to get my mind right.

It's supposed to be

Yo' accomplishments only matter to you

But if they ain't approved of by PO's or peers

Who they matter to?

Not you

I avail to nuthin'

I feel inadequate

I'm in an endless acceptance battle

Doing back flips

Poof magic when nothin' happens

"Click" cuffs — now I'm wearin' counties plain fashion.

-Black Majik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can't wait for part two of this fabulous poem. You have some excellent rhyming skills. Now, we want to know — what have you accomplished in your life that you are proud of? What are you ashamed of? Do you see yourself getting out of the system? Also, make sure that with every step you take — you are following your heart. 'Cause in the end — you have to answer to yourself!

**To tha DA I'm just a
hazardous chemical,
Dispose of me before I
affect tha community**

VICTIM Of The STREETS

My actions was of a stupid passion
While I'm in court with the victim clashin'

Smashin' for no particular reason

If my Holy Ghost could intervene wit' me

Before my laws ridiculous treason

Adhesion wit' Jesus would be da best proposition

'Cause if I live and not listen

I have to watch for the glisten in my peripheral vision

No doctor incision could open my hard head

And put life into perspective before I end up dead

Life spent and built quick like pitch tents no incense

could open my nose to life and smell the coffee

I'm a victim of the streets like Kudafl.

-Black Majik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you could embrace Jesus as a part of your life, do you think that you could make better decisions? Do you think religion could somehow control your actions? How can you make yourself a survivor of the streets rather than a victim? Solid writing!

The VICTIM

Everyday of my life I see the victim of my crimes,
every time I look in the mirror

I see him.

All the times I see my reflection

I ask myself why?

Why do I do the things I do?

Is it worth living the lifestyle I'm living now?

To be quite honest, NO!

Now I'm stuck living in a detention facility
wishing I could have done things different,
and not be the victim of my own poor decision-
making.

-D-Minus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You can chose to be 'the victim' or you can choose to be 'the beneficiary' of your decisions. You can't go back in time, but you sure can control your future - Get it? So, what's worth it? You're a smart guy, you decide.

**I'm a victim of
the streets**

Krusher And Young Smokey's Page

**I had an all
new public
defender, and
she sat wit'
me and told
me 'bout
my case**

Night After Court

What up wit' ya, Beat! Man, today I went to court, like I said in the last piece, "Night Before Court" — and for some strange reason, court did not go like I planned it was gonna go; which in a way is good, I guess.

But anyways, first I had an all new public defender, and she sat wit' me and told me 'bout my case. She said the case I got is lookin' bad for me 'cause the police reports read like I went crazy and tried to hurt my victims. Now as far as I'm concerned, I ain't got no victims, 'cause I ain't did nothin' to begin wit'.

She also told me that she gonna have my court date put off till the sixteenth of this month, so she can do some research on my case — interview my victims and try to catch them in a lie. 'Cause that is all thei' case is built on, a lie!

So my day was coo' 'cause my court got put off for a few weeks. Well, till next time I drop a few lines — y'all stay safe! An' I hope for y'all everything is fine! And to all good luck wit' ya cases! Stay out of trouble and get out soon. Wit' much respect to all, I'm out.

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't know the details of your case, but if the truth is on your side, sounds like you have the right lawyer now! But let's imagine your case got dropped altogether. That'd be great! Nothing better, right? Right ... if — if you don't go back to doing what you do, living on the edge of the law: payback, jealousy and civil war; packing pistols and riding forth. You've got to pull up out of that life, or it's all just a matter of time.

Love Is

love is tucking you in bed
love is kissing you good night
love is listening and laughing
love is asking questions
love is commitment and responsibility
love is no fun at all unless
love is you and me

-Krusher, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Love can be fun and hard work, too; you'll stay free if you do what you need to do.

Night Before Court

Tomorrow I got court in the afternoon. I ain't 'bout to lie, 'cause tell ya the truth — I'm light-weight spooked!

'Cause this time when I go to court, I know they ain't gonna give me a few months, or group home, etc. This time when I get sent back to San Mateo County, dependin' on whether or not they convict me wit' this felony — I'd get four years just for that felony!

My max time is like two-and-a-half years, which ain't a lot; but I get sent to the Y — and me bein' a homeboy, I got to max out. And to me (maybe not to you) six years is a lot of wasted time!

So I been stressin' the whole day, just replayin' the events of my last day on the outs, and how the next day I woke up wit' a lil' hangover, found out I was not dreamin' and that I was really back in a cell! All I could say to myself was — damn!

Beat readers: Whoever readin' this, wish me luck. I'll write down what happened in court in a piece called "Night After Court" — more than likely, it be next to this one. So do what ya do and read it! Wit' much respect, I'm ghost!

-Young Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How old are you, sixteen? Seventeen? Yes, six years is a long time to anyone at any age, but to someone your age — six years! But now, you need to rethink this "homeboys have to max out" thing. Yeah, it would be easy to max out, and it would be hard to keep your head up and stay out of the mix — but stay out of the mix is what you need to do, whether you go to the Y or not! It's time for you to make some changes — for your child's sake and your own.

Perfect Together

we are going to stay around each other
stop being human and become lovers
our love will be forever
never-ending passion in our stare
we will be each other's shelter
someone we can belong to
when we are in pain we'll make it better
if we are in trouble we will solve it out
no one ruins this love we stay side by side
we will nurture each other's body
and carry our hearts together forever
we'll be the perfect parents of our kids
each other's fantasy so that we won't have to pretend
we will laugh and smile and maybe even cry once in a while
i'll buy you flowers and beg a bit
with no words i can talk to you and you to me
we know each other's pain that no one sees
but i've got you and you've got me
and that is all we will ever need
we can cuddle and lay beside one another
you'll understand me because you are the only girl for me
and most important you will feel the same way for me
— i — love — you — yvette —

-Krusher, 150 Crew

From The Beat: On such dreams of love are foundations laid, but to build the structure demands commitment day after day; not only to each other, but to living your life out of trouble. Let this love inspire you to make all the changes you need in order to stay free — earning your pay legitimately so you two can live happily ever after, sharing lives of love and laughter.

Rainbow Ride

if i took a rainbow's ride
i could be there by your side
when i take my rainbow's ride
you would be there by my side

-Krusher, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Live right, and after a time, the end of the rainbow, will be thine.

Young Happy's Page

That Night

Hey y'all what's cracka lackin'? Well, the same over here in max unit — nothing but chillin' and wasting time behind these cold county doors. It's Thursday night and there ain't shhh crackin' tonight so I'm going to tell ya a short story.

Well, one night I was at my patna house and there wasn't shhh crackin' so we called up some homeboys and hell homegirls and then got a party started with a quick barbecue and then we went on a quick liquor run and got hella Hennessy, Jose Cuervo, Bacardi Vanilla, Corona, 211's and hella forties for everyone.

Then I called up my cousin and got a hell of a lot of purple from the cannabis club called White Russian. Then that's when the 'G was over and everyone started to drink and all the fun started when we made a circle like we were camping and started drankin' and smokin' chewies in his backyard until my patna popped out his dad's little bottle of Ta-Ta-Scon and that's when everyone was hella drunk and my patna was acting a fool trying to fight my other homey because he said he was disrespecting him. They were arguing for a minute until my crazy homie busted a full bottle of Henn over my homie's head and after that happened the other homie took off on him and then they started dukin it out.

Then my one homie knocked out my other homie and that's when everybody cut out. Me and my homie cut to his house at 2:00 am in the morning. We got

punked by two big ass pits. They were chasing us all the way to the park where my patna lives. By the time we got to his house he was scared as hell throwing shhh all over the place saying he murdered his own patna then he woke up his mom and pops and they were trying to calm his hysterical ass down.

I kept on telling him that the other homie was not dead — he was just knocked out from that Ta-Ta-Scon. Ta-Ta-Scon is a hardcore bottle of liquor from another country. Anyways I told my homie to call the other homie's house and see if he would answer. He called and the homie answered and then the homie hung up real quick. Then I told him, "I told you, dumb ass."

Then an hour after all the drama was gone me and my homie remembered we still had some bud and drank left. So I called up one of the homegirls. She drove her beamer to my homeboy's house and then we started to drink and smoke again but my homie was so tired from running from them pits that he passed out on the living room floor.

Me and one of the girls went to my homeboy's room turned off the lights and you know what all night long.

-Young Happy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You deliver a wild violent ride of a story. You are a good storyteller. Did you learn any lessons from this night? If you could go back in time, would you do anything differently? Why does this night stick out in your mind? Have you ever had a memorable night without using drugs or alcohol? If not — you need to re-evaluate your life. Keep pushing the pencil, you have skills as a writer!

INTRODUCTION

Hey y'all I'm kinda new to The Beat my nick name over here in max unit is "Young Happy," because I stay cheesing but y'all can call me "Young O" which is the letter from my last name.

I'm over here chillin' with the homie. I wrote to The Beat a few times. The last time I wrote was about the end of June and that was volume 9.26 "The Big Gun Case" pg.37. I did 68 days so far and I already got sentenced to Camp for a four-month program so they should scoop me up anytime now.

The reason I'm here in the Hall is because of a gun. I'm hella lucky I only got four months not including the two months I already did in the Hall. The judge was thinking about 2-3 years but the DA felt that I shot in the air rather than at people. I believe the judge gave me a second chance. Every night I think man, that DA could have washed me and gave me 2-3 years in the Y and then what would I have done? Nothing but sink in that hole and get more time whether it was fighting or getting caught up with gang rivals.

This is my fourth time here and I am pretty sure I have learned my lesson. When I get out I am going to try to stop smoking and I am going to try to attend my old school San Leandro High again. So I can get my diploma. Ha ha ha.

-Young Happy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're pretty sure you learned your lesson?! Damn, you shot a gun into the air! That bullet has to come down! You could have hit an innocent bystander, an animal, a car! You could be charged with murder! Wake up Happy! Given you caught a huge break, we wish you the best of luck at Camp and we hope that you have truly learned your lesson to the fullest.

I want to change but drugs keep on holding me down like a weight at the bottom of the sea.

What They See...

Well, after I've been locked up four times, the cops constantly been passing by my block trying to catch me slippin'. They think once you have been locked up for a minute that you can't change. Whenever a cop sees me on the street they usually pass by more then once and when they do they try to be sneaky.

The only people that think I can change is my family and parents. My friends think when I get out that I am going to be the same old thug I used to be. Even though my homeboys and homegirls think I'm a no good thug, I know they still got love and respect for me.

I want to change but drugs keep on holding me down like a weight at the bottom of the sea.

-Young Happy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Painful piece here. You briefly describe you struggling with encounters with the police, the desire to change and drug addiction. Can you break the chains of addiction and incarceration? What advice would you give to someone in your situation? Does being in Juvenile give you a chance to recuperate and be away from drugs? Can you stay clean for when you hit the streets again? What's it gonna take? What kind of role can your family play and can they be helpful?

Dontae And Friskie's Page

One Can Only Dream

One can only dream
 Things could be as they seem
 In reality people are truly cruel
 They try to act hard
 But end up acting the fool
 One can only dream
 People would one day change their ways
 Some of these people don't know how
 limited are their days
 Each day another person goes astray
 People are starting wars with sets all around the Bay
 Little do they know
 Today could be their last day
 One can only dream
 Of one day finding love
 One can only pray
 To be with our Lord up above
 Needless tears fall everyday
 We need more compassion
 It's our only way
 One can only dream
 Things could be as they seem
 These are my ideas
 What would be your dream?

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: Here's our dream — that you take some of these dreams you have and act upon them, turning them from dreams that one can only hope for into realities towards which your actions can lead. Can you lead the way by example, by words and actions? What will it take to keep yourself from going astray? How can you seek love on many levels, from the love of a relationship with a partner to love of the people in your community? How can you demonstrate the compassion that you seek? Our dream would be to see you start to transform your ideas into reality and spread them far and wide.

Paint Me Black

paint me black
 paint me
 black
 the most authentic
 thing you can see
 paint me black
 'cause i don't want anything
 to change my shade
 immerse my soul in its essence
 and show me what you've made
 splash the most beautiful tones
 upon my skin
 paint me black
 for the person within
 paint me for all that i am
 for my history paint me
 and shine me up
 for the world to know
 paint me black
 'cause i've got stories
 other colors haven't told
 paint me black
 and i'm sure you'll find
 the other color fits me perfect
 but doesn't control my mind

-Dontae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a wonderful poem — full of beauty, meaning and pride. It is inspiring. But when you take inspiration from someone else's poem, give the original author credit for the gift you (and now we) have received.

Drama

People causing drama
 Only caring about they self
 And so unwilling
 to share the wealth
 People causing all this strife
 Too much drama
 People trying to ruin
 each other's life
 Why can't we just get along?
 Why must people be so cruel
 Even when we did nothing wrong?
 This ain't karma
 This is stupid
 It's just pure drama
 Please oh please
 Let me go home
 I'm sick of these females
 Talking 'bout hangin' wit' the
 homeboys alone
 'Cause they just be too much
 drama . . .

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: Why do you think people, especially your peers in the Hall, are not able to "just get along"? How do you deal with your frustration when there's too much drama, when you've had too much of being surrounded by the same girls day after day? What can you do, in your own little way, to help ease the drama?

My Life Is Who Made Me

see my mind is motivated
 while my behind's incarcerated
 in jail — i try but here you're hated
 but i stay strong instead of faded
 'cause if you let the system have you broken
 you'll think you're jaded
 then those doors won't ever open
 so when you land here stop your joking
 unless you want your temple swollen
 keep all your comments to yourself
 don't speak unless you're spoken to
 let your heart and your mind collide
 find who you are deep deep inside
 ask yourself before you ride
 can you really handle it outside
 so if you can't — just ride the tide
 'cause no one cares about your side

-Dontae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is some hard advice about how to survive inside — with mind, body and soul intact. Yet it's more of a challenge than an accomplished fact. And those who try what you suggest, stand a better chance than the rest — to realize: there's no good reason to ride if you want to stay free outside.

Be Careful What You Do

it's dangerous when i feel unsafe
 and i have to relate to packing my thang
 'cause everybody gang bang
 it's dangerous when i gotta do what i do
 or when i act a fool
 it's dangerous when a fool ride through
 turf of a rival crew
 but you won't see 'till it comes to be
 it's dangerous when some fool
 disrespectfully
 speaks of what he sees
 for danger surrounds you and me
 so be careful what you do
 unless you're a fool

-Dontae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem wraps itself in a tone of wisdom, but at its heart is a threat. The violence beneath the surface seeks to represent strength, but in reality is the very same foolishness of which it warns — believe it and you'll do yourself harm!

Smile

I'd go to the end of the earth
 To see what it feels like to smile
 I've been hurting for so long
 And I've been crying for a while
 I'd give anything to feel what it feels like
 To wear a smile
 I've never worn a smile upon my face
 Why must I be apart
 Of the smiles human race
 All I want is to smile . . .

-Friskie, San Mateo

From The Beat: Searching to the ends of the earth may not result in you finding your smile. What is it that you have inside you that can bring the smile back?

**be careful what you do
 unless you're a fool**

Shadow's Page

Guns

Why do people kill
Makin' it so we feel
Terror walkin' down our own streets
We have no right to play "God"
And decide the fate of someone else
Man, I wish there was never a gun
'Cause if there weren't one
Life would be more fun
Not havin' to worry when they'll die
Why can't everyone trade their gat for a pipe
Everyone should get high with me
And my point they'll see
Peace starts with me
The youth of tomorrow
No one should have to feel sorrow
'Cause someone shot their brother
Or maybe their mother
Put the gun away
In a hole forever to stay
Can't we all get along
And kick it hittin' a bong?

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's unfortunate that people are running around with guns killing each other for chump change and/or and exchange of words. That sucks. Do you really believe that if everybody smoked together things would get better?

The Pool

Back when I was in school
We used to kick it in an empty pool
With a big ass puddle in it
And we used it to get lit
And run around the puddle
Trying not to stumble
And fall in
'Cause it was dirty as sin
We used to do everything in it
We had chairs and a rolling table
So that we could be able
To roll some joints and hotbox
Too bad the hole didn't have a door and locks
We found that place
And now it belongs to youth's race
We go back now and then
To hotbox it again
But it just ain't the same
'Cause we're out of school, and that's lame

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you think about this empty pool, do you think of happy memories? Do you think that there are now new occupants of this pool? If you were out right now, would you be kicking it there?

Heaven or Hell Karma decides to whom your soul to sell

Karma

When is the world gonna learn
Killin' someone mentally don't help to earn
Going to the big pearly gates
In the sky but you make your fate
And you could go to the fiery gates
To a place called hell
Where it's worse than a jail cell
Life is about karma comin' back
And what karma comin' back to smack
Or it can give you a sack
And after death karma decides
Which life's rule you'll abide
Heaven or Hell
Karma decides to whom your soul to sell

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Why do you that only some people believe in karma? Why do you think that folks mistreat each other? You know what, don't trip, just make sure that your karma will always be good.

The World Ain't What It's Supposed To Be

Why was this place created?
Definitely not to cause pain and be hated
This place called Earth is supposed to be loving
This world is supposed to be a family of caring
To help one another when we're down
Not to look at someone and frown
And definitely not to laugh at someone
Everyone is supposed to have fun
But how are we supposed to have fun
When everyone's hatin' on someone
Makin' 'em feel like zero
I mean come on, this person could be a hero
And when your life needs savin'
He'll be the one wavin'
At you 'cause you were hatin'
People, can't we become the family we need?
And be the ones who plants a seed
To begin world peace
All this nonsense needs to cease!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We wish that we could get along too but unfortunately this rarely seems to happen. Have you ever seen the movie "Demolition Man"? It takes place in 2032 and you should see how people treat and act towards each other. You will like that movie.

Why was this place created? Definitely not to cause pain and be hated

Shadow And Logan's Page

A Human Being

I am what I am and that's all that I am
 I'm different and I want it to be known
 Different like I am my own
 'Cause I am goth
 And I like to wear black cloth
 'Cause it's what I feel most comfortable in
 And it has to be black as sin
 I like to wear fishnet shirts
 And I like piercing myself 'cause it hurts
 Just 'cause I'm different doesn't mean I'm not human
 And I like life when I'm shroomin'
 'Cause life is so much easier to understand
 Like the back of my hand
 I like to wear boots with fourteen eyes
 And in a men's ten size
 I like to wear a lot of spikes
 So people say yikes
 When I'm walkin' down the street
 Panhandlin' for somethin' to eat
 'Cause I got the munchies hell a bad
 And cottonmouth so bad it's sad
 I like being different than you
 So if you don't like it — then boo hoo
 I don't need you to tell be how to be
 When I look in the mirror, I like what I see!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Variety is the spice of life so stay different. If people don't like you — hey you never asked them to. Are you accepting of other people's differences? How can you encourage others to be different?

Lost

I am lost
 My path has crossed
 Into the darkness of nowhere
 And I don't know how to bear
 The problems that have entered
 My life has splintered
 Into a million tiny fragments
 And my feet feel like blocks of cement
 While I'm trying to stay above the water
 That represents my problems together
 'Cause I can't breathe
 And they have shattered my teeth
 And they have gouged out my eyes
 And they don't care how I die
 But I don't know how to escape
 My problems that rape
 And I'm starting to lose it
 And I don't know if I fit
 In society today
 'Cause everyone thinks I'm gay
 I don't know how
 I make it, wow!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In life, there will always be someone who will try to hurt you, but don't trip off these sadistic people. Continue to love yourself and be safe. You are special. Disregard what other people say and love yourself to the fullest!

**But you know why you can't, because
 you have dug yourself too deep.**

Free From This World

I wish I were free from this big world of hurt,
 Because here if you make a bad enough mistake,
 it is your shirt.
 Sometimes you want to go home so
 bad you even weep,
 But you know why you can't, because you have
 dug yourself too deep.
 If you want the staff to be cool,
 Then all you have to do
 is just don't act like a fool.
 If we act like a bunch of crooks,
 Then staff say hell no and make us read books.
 If you are here in this place called jail,
 That means in your life you could fail.
 And every night you pray,
 God please don't make me stay.

-Logan, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Logan, you wish for relief from the emotional pain/Feeling as if your life is in vain/We know there are people in your life who care/They may even be sitting in a staff's chair/You are far from a failure/We know that for sure.

**I think there should be more
 homes for the poor,
 And then at least they will
 have a home and a front door**

People In Need

When I see a poor person begging for money,
 It makes me want to cry and no matter why they are poor, it
 is far from funny.
 It makes me wish I were rich,
 So I could help all of them climb out that messy ditch.
 It may be strange,
 But I would love to help them change.
 Many people just drive by and stare,
 And I wonder deep down in their hearts if they care.
 The poor have a heart,
 And that means they should get a new start.
 Many think that the poor are going to hurt you,
 But some may be nice and I know that is true.
 Many ask, "Why do poor people eat out of the trash,"
 Well, here is the answer: They have no cash.
 I think there should be more homes for the poor,
 And then at least they will have a home and a front door
 That can give them a chance to a second life to live,
 And that would be the best thing society could give.
 The poor need a home to sleep in night and day,
 But in real life all I can do is get on my knees and pray.

-Logan, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Once again, Logan, you address a difficult issue in your writing. One that causes us to stop and reevaluate our perspective on those less fortunate. You may want to consider how you could become involved in something like Habitat for Humanity. This organization builds homes for people who are struggling financially and helps them realize their dream of owning a home. You may be able to complete some of your community service hours with this organization. Ask your probation officer.

Logan's Page

Drugs For Power

In this big hour,
I wonder why people use drugs for power?
Why use such an ungrateful thing?
Because jail, sickness, even death it will bring
It hurts to know why so many cry,
It is because using drugs makes people die.
What if your families were a victim of these drugs?
That is one less person to hug.
Drugs do no good,
Knowing it killed more than half of your 'hood.
Your life was once cool and fine,
And now that is gone just for buying that dime.
What a druggie drags his family and friends
through is not fair,
And you wonder why they cry, it is because they
just buy and don't care.
Let me get to the point,
Stop hitting on that damn joint.
And one day you may hear your mom say,
He/she belonged to me, he/she is mine, (as she
sobs) but not any more
Because he/she is in prison
for selling that last dime.

-Logan, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Logan, very good insight on the drug situation, that drugs affect more than just the user. Have you experienced this situation personally? Keep on writing. Keep on being honest. Most of all, keep being who you are and remember to love who you are.

Rich Or Poor

What if we had flying cars
And the biggest place that reaches the stars?
It sounds like a dream,
Like every meal would be cookies and cream.
Now if you had everything you wanted, would you share?
Would you help the needy or would you not care?
Would you do well for the need?
Or would you laugh at them as they cried and plead?
You could even give up 900 billion dollars and you
wouldn't even if it was gone in a poof,
Or would you not and spend it on a home with a big roof?
What if it was the other way around
and you slept on the ground,
And you needed money from the rich man but he was
nowhere to be found?
He has all this cash to blow,
And he won't even give you a little for your kids to grow.
So do you think you could now share?
Because you now know what it is like on the other side
running around in the snow with your feet bare.
Find the right thing to do,
Because the suffering one may be you.

-Logan, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Very good piece! It will serve you well to be aware of the plight of others. Not everything that glitters is gold. Sometimes having all of the material things in the world cannot help you escape your inner self. It is very good that you will judge a person on his/her merit and not by what material things he/she just happens to have. Do you know any wealthy people who are generous? What's made you adopt this kind of thinking and why do you think others don't?

My 16th Birthday

Spending my birthday here is going to be hard,
Because unlike here,
there you get to run freely in the yard.
At home I would have family giving me their love,
But here in Durango all I can do
is pray to God above.
I am trying to get away from my past,
But it was not going away
like I wanted which was fast.
I could be home right now for that special day,
It would be great to be there and laugh and play.
But I have to face reality, which is well shone,
And that I am here in Durango
and not even near home.
So on my birthday I can only see
my parents for an hour,
And one thing I worry about is stinking, for we only
get one shower.
The urge to do wrong I will fight,
Because if I want to go home, I have to do right.
I could be getting my driver's license right now,
But now I may have to wait
until I am 18 to know how.
But because of the choices
I have made that are bad,
That means on my special day I cannot be glad.
My dad used to say "think before you do,
Because if you don't, I can't help you."
I didn't actually believe so,
But I am now here with nowhere to go.
So I will spend my birthday in jail,
Only because I wanted to go down the wrong trail.

-Logan, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Logan, you wrote another great piece. It is never easy spending your birthday away from your family. Time never seems to go fast when you want it to. Do you think your dad is right? What do you do to control the urges to fight? Do you think you can do that on the outs to keep yourself out of Durango?

Keeping Cool

In life, people do all they can to keep cool,
But some don't and go around and live like a fool.
Some earn their money in their life,
Others just stick up banks or use a knife.
I want to say this to those people out there who
think they have no love,
It's not true because normal families do push
and shove.
Hate and crime is not the only way,
Because doing the right things will give good pay.
You can always have trust,
Only if you were not in that drug bust.
Don't do the thing and make it your last,
Because I know you will regret your past.

-Logan, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Logan your flows are fine/always making a point with your rhyme/Once again you're contemplative/You have so much to give this life/Where will you start to heal your broken heart? We know you can redeem your past/building positive memories that will last.

"The Victim"**Myself The Victim**

The victim was myself
living in the cell
raising hell
oh well
smoking weed
when I get out
but you know
I let my rhymes flow
as I open the door
letting all the girls know
Lil' D fo' sho'.

-Duane

From The Beat: So what are you going to do to make sure that you don't come back? We hope that's a part of your plan.

The Victim

If I had the time and chance to meet the victim I robbed, I wouldn't say shhh to them. I wouldn't even want to meet them because if they say something out of pocket, I would have to check 'em and let them know what's up.

I would tell the victim that he shouldn't have been flossin' his money and he wouldn't have got robbed. Period.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: What we see here is a bad train of thought. You can't possibly believe that people aren't gonna floss. It's you that has to resist the temptation of the fast cash flow. Get yo' own shhh legitly and stop tryin' to take what others got, or you'll always be a part of the system.

We're the Victims

we're the victims to these ghetto streets
putting in work slamming heads on the concrete
paranoid so i don't go to sleep
have to sell dope for my family to eat
always strapped up
with a pistol on my lap and gauge in the cuts
you can't get shot at and not bust back
this world needs to relax
before i lose my mind and hit like a pit-bull attack
and you don't want that
so like i said you gotta pack heat
'cause realistically we're all victims of the street

-Lil' Gato

From The Beat: A gun can't stop a bullet, you still die; or if you pull it, get twenty-five with an L locked in a cell. Everybody packing heat, means everybody stays a victim of the street — a self-fulfilling prophecy! Be realistic, don't volunteer to be a statistic. Don't wait for the world to relax, to change your act.

Revenge Or Remorse

If I had a choice to meet my victim, would I want to? Hell yeah I would want to! And when I see her, I'll want to put my hands on her — because if she had never called five-oh, then me and my ninja Boobie wouldn't be in this hellhole. And when I'm speaking about a hellhole, I mean the whole system!

Anyway, if I would meet my victim, I would probably drop that woman. Why? Because she snitched on us. But, I guess, if somebody did to my sister or my mother what we did to her, I wouldn't like it — snatched her purse like we did. But nobody is that bold to dare risk their life by victimizing a female in my family, 'cause we don't allow it.

And now to finish on this week's topic: Do I feel any remorse towards my victim? Well, probably just a little now, because I've thought hard about it. But then, I remember that I just needed money, and that's when I have to do what I have to do, to make my money and survive, with my little partna, Boobie.

But now, when I think about my case, and somebody asks me what did I do to get in Juvy — I hate tellin' 'em what I did! But then, I don't lie. I never lie, because I don't need to lie to kick it. Peace out.

-Howard

From The Beat: You tell us you want to be a square, but this piece is full of that old thug-thinking that put you here. You say you surrender to God's will, but it says in the Gospel that you cannot worship God and Mammon (money) at the same time. Yet you give yourself permission to do whatever if you need the money. To surrender, means you bring your will into line with God's. Yet you stubbornly nurture your old will that would have you laying hands on a woman you've already victimized once! You family values revenge; but if you really want to surrender to God's will — revenge must end! The little remorse you feel isn't enough to make your surrender real. God's will?

My Victim

i ain't trying to see my victim
because from what
my cousins be tellin' me
she runnin' around
with a blade for me
and her husband
with a gage for me
guess i should have found
a different way
to get my shhh back
i'll deal with that
when i get out

-Bad Choice

From The Beat: No doubt you could have found a better way. However, by the time you're out of ROP, you'll be focused on getting a j-o-b; and hopefully that mess will be ancient history.

The Enemy

The only victims that I have is my enemies. Because my enemies is the ones that hurt me, like shooting me, stabbing, hitting or burning me.

Why people tried to do that to me? Because I gang bang or my homeboys did things to them before. I don't care about my victims, that's why I do the things I do.

-Perico

From The Beat: Your attitude is the same attitude your enemies have towards you. If they cared about you, then there would be no problem. Don't you feel like this is a problem? Does it sound crazy, the idea that everyone can care about everyone, to stop all this senseless violence? What do you think? You like being stabbed? Shot? Burned? Dying? How and when will this end? You tell us — teach us.

Victimize

Victims are people who are weak-minded and people who let others walk all over them. But that's not all true. They will take advantage of people who are ignorant.

The system will also try to take advantage of you if you caught slippin' or they think you slippin'. The weak minded go quickly along with the ignorant ones and the easiest to get. The ones they catch slippin' are a lil' bit harder because they have to wait for them to slip.

Don't and want to let the system make a victim out of you. They think once they got you — they got you. But that shhh ain't true. I could be going to tha "Y" but I'm not. Instead I'ma do a couple months in Rita than a couple years in the "Y." People think once you got — it's over. Check it out tho, it's only over if you let them take you down.

They don't have no sympathy or pity fo' you. They trying get you off the streets and in The Beats, boy. Can't let that happen lil' one. Now can ya? So pimp yo' program and keep yo' head up. Set a goal you can get out. Don't let yourself become a victim.

-Big Samoa

From The Beat: Why do you think that all victims are weak minded? Just because a person is nice and doesn't make a big stink out of everything, does that make that person weak? How can you make it so that once you get out — you will no longer be a victim of the system? Do you think that all victimizers were once victims? Tell us your thoughts.

My Victim Got Me Here

I wouldn't want to meet my victim, because he's the person that got me in this situation I'm in now.

If he just wouldn't've run away and called the police, then I wouldn't be in here doing my little time I have to do. I would be at home chilling with my brothers and cousins, and my mother and friends.

And if I wanted to talk to the victim, I couldn't anyway, because the victim doesn't know English. But if I knew I was going to get caught, I would've never did the crime I have committed.

But when I get out, I'm going to lay low, kick back and relax — and stay out of trouble and just kick it and live. I jus' really want to go home and be with my family where I'm supposed to be, at home, enjoying myself instead of being in here stuck in an institution.

-Robert

From The Beat: Communication is still possible across a language barrier. You could talk with a translator or interpreter. But your piece makes us wonder if you've learned anything from all this. You say you wouldn't have done it if you knew you were going to get caught?! Hello?! — Don't you know yet, every time you "get away with it" — you tell yourself to do you can do it again, and again, till you do get caught. It's a set up. You get caught if you don't stop — and blaming your victim doesn't help at all!

I'm The Victim

The victim is me because all I was doing was just walking down the street wit' my ninjas and we just got done smoking and we was on our way back to my other patnas house.

We was about three blocks away and some dumb "boy" ran up on a old lady and took her purse and ran and got away.

-Renny

From The Beat: Was the boy your friend? If he was, what did you tell him about his act? If not, how did this act get pinned on you?

Victim to Murder

so many people have fell victim
to a murder it's sad
i want to see
how thei' life change
it's crazy how people die
all over the world
but life goes on
in other parts
nobody out of thei' circles
cares — well not
the majority of them

-L' Clark

From The Beat: It is sad indeed. These circles of concern need to see across the street — before the whole world burns.

"I Love It When . . ."**I Love It Free**

i love it when i get a release
because i don't feel the same
when i am on the outs
as when i am in here
i get so mad and frustrated
i feel like i want to hurt somebody
just because i'm locked up

-Marcus

From The Beat: Keep writing about your feelings and hopefully you won't have to be dealing with the consequences of acting on your rage. The sooner you turn the page, the better you'll feel — inside and out!

Love to Hate

I love it when ninjas hate, because you know you're doing something good. That's why he want what you've got. So he's going to keep on ballin' blockin' while you're still shinin' — like the spinner on a scraper. Where I'm from, they love to hate us.

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: Lift your gaze higher than this drama, 'cause it has you coming to the Hall 'stead of home with your mama.

Right Here, Right Now

i love it when i wake up
to see another day
just got to thank god
for what he has done for me
it touches me
to see that he cares
he's watching down on me
like a hawk in the sky
right here right now

-Right Mind

From The Beat: You show your gratitude with praise, and that's cool — but show it too, by what you choose to do every day.

My Girl

I love it when I am sleep on the outs early in the morning and my girl would come and get in bed with me and then I would ...

-Renny

From The Beat: What else do you like about your girl besides the sex?

**i wish i could
have said my
good-byes
rest in peace
free now
from all
enemies**

Me An' My Lady

i love it when me an' my lady
post up at her house and just kick back
an' relax an' blaze up a chronic sack
of that indo doja chocolate tar weed
an' soak on a fifth of that hennessy
i love it when me an' my lady
take her daughter outside to play
i love it when me an' my lady
play-fight an' wrestle
i love it when me an' my lady
are all alone kissing so slow
an' so passionately
but what i really love the most
is when me an' my lady are just together
doing anything an' everything

-Young Scooby

From The Beat: Because that last part is what you love most, you need to put that dope up out your life — for her daughter's sake and your lady's too, all right? If you really care as much as you say, and want to share the love forever and a day — start living your life the right way! Then this poetic fantasy will come to be your permanent reality!

**i love it when
me an' my lady
are all alone**

i love it

yeah i love it when
ninjas be hatin'
and trash talkin'
'bout some fake stuff
but never ready to size up
but always ready to down-talk you
in yo' face they yo' friend
when you ain't there
ninjas want yo' head
yeah i love it when
ninjas down-talk you
but they really hatin'
'cause you gettin' money
and you know why
these ninjas hate you
'cause they ain't got nothin'

-Lil' Shimbo

From The Beat: It's definitely not just about money. Give up that so-called easy money that has you coming to lock up, and see how many of your so-called friends hate on you. Plenty! But since they're going to hate anyway — quit, go legit, and be free!

I Love It When

I love it when I am at home
with my baby mama and we are hugged up,
laying in the bed.
Or when I'm with my son and we are at the park
with his mother and me.
Or when me and my grandma are talking about things
that are going on in the family.
Or just kicking back smoking weed
with my sister, brother, and my girl,
that's when I really love it.

-Taze

From The Beat: Sounds like you're a family guy. We can appreciate that. Spending time with our loved ones — well, we love those times too.

I Love It

i love it when i see my family
i love it when the day comes
that i go free
i love it when i win
i love it when everyone gets along

-Abbas

From The Beat: Let your love shine!

Rest In Peace

i loved it when we chilled
i loved it when we made that scrill
i loved it when we used to go out dressed to kill
i even loved it when we was off them silly pills
now you're gone
your soul's in the sky above
and i'm hoping you know
you'll always have my love
you were such a down homie
i wish your enemies hadn't taken you from me
i loved it when we drank all that good old forty
i loved it when you were alive
i wish i could have said my good-byes
rest in peace
free now from all enemies

-Baby Gurl

From The Beat: It's such a difficult task, to look back at the past, and separate out the love for those you'll never forget from the things you did with them that you should regret. Don't regret the love that will never die, but the style of living that cost a homie's life— don't romanticize that ride! RIP Lil' Loax.

Wheels Spin

i love it when i stop and wheels spin
i love it when i'm gettin' money
'cause all i do is win
i love it when i roll up a purple blunt
i love it when i hear the slap in my truck
i love it when i'm in oakland gettin' high as what
smokin' dubb sacks of purple stuff
i love it when i'm in a dice game and hit
to tell you the truth
i love my family
gettin' rich and my girl
and forget the rest of the world
no doubt about it

-Darryl

From The Beat: You've got to put these words side by side with a description of how you spend your time inside the Hall — and then remember that this is just a warm up call for the big fall! Unless you wake up soon, it won't be cool at all.

Baby

i love it when i hear your name
gots me saying baby baby baby baby
it's a feeling in my bones
that a man took over my soul
i couldn't breathe if he ever said he'd leave me
i'd get down on my knees till they're bloody
baby please baby baby please

-Krystle

From The Beat: These are traditional love lyrics; yet when we hear it from you, we have to confess we fear for you, too. Reclaim your spirit first; reclaim your soul before you satisfy your thirst for love — since it has you here in jail with thugs.

I Love It When

I love it when I'm free
I love it when I'm charity
I love it when I'm on one
I love it when I'm off grapes
I love it when I'm with my patnas
I love it when I'm at home
I love it when I can do what I want
I love it when I can wear my own clothes
I love it when I can use the bathroom by myself
I love it when I'm with my female
One thing is... I just love it, love it, love it
When I can do those things

-Lil' 9b

From The Beat: We all love to be free, be home, do what we want and wear our own clothes. The Hall sucks! Next time you're on the outs, about to make a poor decision — think about that!

"I Love It When . . ."**I Like It**

i like it when i'm free
i like it when i'm wit' my baby'momma
i like it when i have a good time wit' my partnas
i like it when i got money money money
i like it when i give my mom stuff that she need
i like it when i ride my mini-bike
i like it when girls say what's up
i like it when i get a home-cooked meal

-Lil' John

From The Beat: What your mother needs is for you to stay home free, not that (s)easy money that keeps you under lock and key.

Holla

what's up beat
i'm going to say
what's on my mind today
i love it when ...
i am close to my love' ones
they make me feel like no other
they been there for me since day one
times without them is hard
i got much love for them 'cause
they are one of a kind
love' ones are hard to find
sort of like a diamond
we' going to be with each other
until it's time to go
if we stick together we can go far
keep yo' heads up young playas
you know what's right from wrong
i'm not the one to preach
i'm just telling you how it's 'posed to be
one love

-Vongphachnanh

From The Beat: We cut a part of our piece because it sounded to us like you were writing to your crew, and then you shouldn't assume they know what to do; or even know right from wrong — 'cause you guys have been telling each other the same lies for so long, it begins to sound like weak is strong and wrong is right and a gun will keep you safe at night. So don't write in code, if you really want to teach — say what you know!

I Love It When...

I love it when they tell me that my mom is coming to visit me and she brings me some chips and soda. I love it when I get to see my mom because I love my mom. I would like to see all my family.

-Luis

From The Beat: Well, how can you make it so that your mother can see you every day? How can you make her proud of you?

Release

I love it when I get released.

-The Cat In The Hat

From The Beat: What can you do to gain and maintain your freedom?

I Love It When...

i love it when i get money
'cause it feels good to get things for myself
i love it when i make it home every night
'cause i lived to see the next day
i love it when i see the homies
doin' something good with their life
because i'm not the type to hate
if they're doing better than me
i love it when i'm with my lady
and wake up next to her on da daily
i love it when i'm with the homies
soakin' on forties
i love it when i'm on the outs
because i get to do whatever i feel
what up to all

-Lil' Mono

From The Beat: You've got to rethink your definition of freedom, 'cause doing whatever you feel like, is what has you in here — with freedom comes responsibility. It's time for you to step up and be one of those homies doing better than you're doing now.

I Love Trees

I love it when I smoke a blunt to the dome
Then chug a bottle to the face.
I am high as hell.

Think that weed got me seeing two and two of you?
Are you a female or dude?
Should I hack or tie my shoes?
I'm seeing gray and I am out.

-Duane

From The Beat: If weed is causing you to not be able to differentiate a man and a woman — we suggest that you quit soon or you might doing some off tha hook shhh, feel us?

Me An' My Lady

i love it when me an' my lady
post up at her house and just kick back
an' relax an' blaze up a chronic sack
of that indo doja chocolate tar weed
an' soak on a fifth of that hennessy
i love it when me an' my lady
take her daughter outside to play
i love it when me an' my lady
play-fight an' wrestle
i love it when me an' my lady
are all alone kissing so slow
an' so passionately
but what i really love the most
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I Love When Haters Hate

i love it when i got haters
see a hater is someone that can't
get what you got so he hate
it may be a girl or material thangs
see with the girl he or she gon' tell the girl
what he know or what he think
an' he keep hatin' till he get exposed
see with material thangs
he see a ninja shining so he try
to set him up or when he see what you got
he say it's fake or some riff raff
but i love it an' you probably wonder
why you love haters
because when i look at a hater
they look hella desperate to have what you got
sometimes they be snitchin' talking to the fed's
i mean if you want what i got
just ask and i happily give you whatever it is
but they i guess that's too hard
but i love it when you keep hatin'
'cause i'm gon' keep paper chasin'
i'm pierre aka on-one-don

-Pierre

From The Beat: You've got to take your chase up off street if you want to stay on your feet and shine in the fresh air where you can live and be free. You set yourself up for the fed's when you're breaking laws instead of giving your all to legal ways of getting paid. Slow your roll, 'cause you're balling out of control.

Rest In Peace

i loved it when we chilled
i loved it when we made that scrill
i loved it when we used to go out dressed to kill
i even loved it when we was off them silly pills
now you're gone
your soul's in the sky above
and i'm hoping you know
you'll always have my love
you were such a down homie
i wish your enemies hadn't taken you from me
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-Marcus

From The Beat: Keep writing about your feelings and hopefully you won't have to be dealing with the consequences of acting on your rage. The sooner you turn the page, the better you'll feel — inside and out!



"I Love It When . . ."**I Love It When**

I love it when I get to go home on da weekend and see my ninjas.
 I love it when I go see my momma.
 I love it when I come to the city and see ninjas that is really studio.
 I love it when ninjas know I'm from Fillmore
 I really love it when I'm out of jail.

-AG

From The Beat: So are you going to have to give up some of the things you love in order to stay out?

Loving Freedom

I love it when I'm on the outside instead of in this cell. I love it when I have the choice, the choice to live my life the way I wanna live it. I love it when I can wake up when I want to, blaze up when I want to, raise up when I want to. I love breathing fresh air.

Naw! On the contrary, I love it when I catch a case! I love it when the pigs chase, I love it when I'm bein' cuffed. Otherwise I wouldn't have screwed up! I love it when I can admit I have some issues to cope with. I don't wanna come back here. I love it when I'm free.

-Rashad B4

From The Beat: This is a complicated and interesting way of putting it, Rashad. We know you love your freedom (even if, by exercising it, you sometimes get yourself into trouble), but we're most intrigued by your loving the chase, the cuffs, the case. Are you being serious — loving the excitement — or are you being ironic? Or, are you making the subtle point that without the loss of freedom, you wouldn't appreciate freedom as much as you do?

Mom's Visits

I love it when I see my mom at visiting. She comes every day to see me. If I had a bad day she would make me happy. When I get out, I will never come back.

-Sean B1

From The Beat: Sean, we hope you are right about not coming back, because there is no better gift you could give your mother than that. But if you do get caught up, then just get up, dust yourself off, and try again.

I Love It When...

I love it when I feel money. I love it when I'm with my family. What with it Beat? It's me, Zoomungus. You know what I love the most? I love clothes. But one thang fo' sure is I don't love being locked up.

-Zoomungus V5

From The Beat: How do clothes make you feel different? That fast money comes with consequences, so if you don't like to be locked up, you might need to change your career field.

I don't wanna come back here. I love it when I'm free.

I Love It When...

I love it when I'm wit' my wife. We got that bond that separates us from the average. I love my freedom 'cause I miss that. This is stopping us, but I'll be back in a minute, and it's gone be me and my girlfriend. Ask cats about that. It can't stop unless some real tragedy happen. But that's off the record.

I love it when I proposed to my wife. It feel like I accomplished something good, and it's hard being away from that. I'm gone.

-Ridah B5

From The Beat: If you really do love your freedom, you will not again be where you are at right now. What will you do different when you're on the outs so that you can prove just how much you love your freedom?

Nothing To Do

I love it when I'm swervin' walkin' down the block ready for whatever, especially ready to spit some game to any beautiful nochi I see on tha block..

Damn! Nothing to do. Time to bounce to a party 'cause I love it when I have a pretty girl next to me and the music bumpin' loud as hell. I love the way I stop hearing the music even though it's still bumpin'.

-Frisko B1

From The Beat: We don't understand why you stop hearing the music if it's still bumpin'. What else do you love?

I Love It When...

I love it when I wake up in the morning and the one female that I have love for is still asleep on the other side of me.

This topic is weak because when I first read it nothing came to my mind. Then I thought about my girl and that's what came to my mind. It ain't too much I can say about, "I love it when..." because it ain't too many things that happen that I really can say, "I love it." It's some things that's cool, such as money, all black and shining girlfriends, cars, clothes, and shows.

I can say I love it when I go to court and see I have support from family and my female. That's something else I can say I love. Them clothes, money, and all that other stuff I can't say I love because all of them things can be gone in a blink of an eye.

-Leek B5

From The Beat: This is interesting, Leek, because you begin by telling us how weak the topic is, how little there is to love, and then you list the most important things of all — support of family and loved ones. Now, those are things to love, and we're glad you know what's important and what isn't.

I Love My Little Brothers

I love it when I spend time with my little brothers. My little brothers help me get through good days and bad days. They come in my room and play video games with me, and we wrestle and play fight.

My little brothers look up to me so I try to set good examples for them so that they'll make good decisions in life. I feel like I'm obligated to do so.

-M B4

From The Beat: We can tell that you must miss your little brother very much. Do you feel you've let them down by the example you're showing them now? How will you make this up to them when you are all together again?

I Love It When...

I love it when you be talking to me, how you be calling me "Papi." You just don't know how you make me feel. I love it when you be flirting with me because I've just been gone for so long. I love it like a fat boy loves cake. I hope you love it when I...

-Noriega B5

From The Beat: Thank you for not writing what it is you hope she loves about you. But, besides that, what do you think she loves about you?

My "Candy Rain" Remix

Verse 1

Have you ever fell in love
 In love at the first sight
 With a girl that looks so fine
 With a smile that will blow your mind

If you have then you should know
 To hold her and don't let go
 Hold her tight and keep her close
 Do what she likes the most

'Cause mommy does deserve the best
 She better than the rest
 Her love is stronger than a vest
 Doesn't cause any stress

Mommy can't be replaced
 That's why I want her to stay
 'Cause she's my...

Chorus 2x
 My love

I got what you need in my genes
 So you come holla at a G like me
 It's guaranteed that you'll be pleased
 'Cause you my...

-M-Burna B5

From The Beat: Thanks for giving props to Immature's original "Candy Rain." No doubt, you got skills, M-Burna, and we've missed them in The Beat. It's been a pleasure for us having you back, even temporarily, and, like we said, we sure hope you write us from the YA. Even though it's skating on being Beat inappropriate, we still love the way your line, "I got what you need in my genes," can be interpreted in two different ways. That's called a "double entendre," and it's a great one. (If you had written "jeans" instead of "genes," we probably wouldn't have included it...)



"I Love It When . . ."

I Love It When

I've been around. Seen some dirt. Done some dirt. But I love it when I'm the leader or center of what I do. People seek my advice.

Sometime I got the best price. I got the answer to everything. But I'm not always nice. I stay on top. Can't be at the bottom. Thrive for stardom. Second place won't cut it.

I'm locked up now. Forget it. But when I get out, my attitude is the same. I love it when I'm on top of my game. November's my time to shine.

-AP

From The Beat: Let's just take one line from this and see what it holds. The line is, "I'm locked up now." How many times do you want to be writing that line in your life? That's a real question, AP, because, based on our experience, your goals of stardom, being on top, shining will always lead you here (or worse) without a commitment first to get out the game. We read a lot of pieces by young people who describe themselves as bosses, as leaders (never followers), as on top of their game, as famous, as shining — but you know what, every one of those pieces is written by a prisoner, a slave. Is that really what you want to be?

Dyin' To Get Out

I love it when I'm on the streets because you have more freedom when I'm out there, because nobody can't tell me what to do except when I'm at home. The reason why I love it so much is because I kept coming here, so I be dyin' to get out while I'm in here. So then every time I get out I love it even more.

-Sir Kenn The Great

From The Beat: There's a problem in this that we hope you see — you love freedom more each time you get locked up, but every time you get locked up you spend less time free and get locked up for even more time. How can you learn to love your freedom while you have it?

I Love It When You Smile

I love it when you smile like you do
I love to see you happy and act a fool
I love the way you smell
I love how you rub my head at night

I love it when you stare at me
When you think I'm not looking
I love to see you every chance I get
I love the way you talk
I love how you act surprised when you're not.

And most of all I love it when you love me.

-Star

From The Beat: The name Star sure does fits you because you are a star when you are putting that pencil to work. How have you managed to build such a solid sounding relationship? How do the two of you deal with times when it isn't going so well?

I Love It When

I love it when . . .
I love it when you're near me
Holding me
I love it when you respect me
In every single way
I love it when you kiss me
Softly and gently
I love it when you're you
Not acting like some fool
I love it when you say you
Love me because I know
Your love is true
I love it...
Because I love you

-Megan

From The Beat: We usually shy away from printing love pieces, but in this case your expression is so touching in its simple purity that we felt other Beat readers could learn from it. How do you decided when you love someone? What responsibilities does love bring along with it?

Hockey

I love it when I play hockey. I love playing hockey because I get that feeling, that great feeling, the best feeling in the world like you're free, free from everything. I get all the anger off my back. I love it.

-The Hockey Man

From The Beat: Even though we don't play hockey, we feel you when you describe how free it makes you feel. Not everybody has that kind of outlet, so we're glad you do. Is there anything else in the world that lets you feel like that? Are there places you can go in your mind (while you're locked up and unable to play hockey) that takes you away from here?

I Love You

When I saw your face it makes me smile,
I love it when you make me smile
When I hear your voice it makes me cry
I love it when you make me cry
It feels like you're the one that have helped
me make it this far
Your eyes make me happy
I love it when you make me happy

You tell me forget them haters
You keep me on track
You keep them haters off my back
I love it when you get them haters off
My back and you keep me on track.

Baby boy it's time to go
But just know
I love it when . . .
You know then end.

-Lil' LayLay

From The Beat: Whoever he is, he's one lucky guy to have such a lovely poem written for him. We are jealous — when are you going to write a poem to/bout us? Just playin', LayLay. On the real, how is it that he's able to keep you on track? What is it that he's able to say to you, or do for you, that keeps you knowing that he's there for you?

Love

I know, I know, it's tough when
You feel like you don't get enough
Of that love
And you want more from
The one above
Even from the family
But it's like you taking steps
'Cause after you feel that
You mad, then you act like you don't care
But really it's not fair
'Cause people don't share the love
Like you want them to
Then you get in that relationship bullshhh
Where it got you saying I love you, I love you
But really you just wanna have
That feeling of saying it to somebody
Then what I got to say about that is stop it

-Medicine

From The Beat: You show a great deal of maturity in your recognition that often when people say, "I love you," it's a selfish act instead of one showing their true love for another. What does it take to build a relationship that isn't bull, that isn't about someone just wanting to say they love someone else, but is instead about becoming better people for being with one another? In a world that seems to highlight the importance of relationships, how are you able to find a level of comfort in being single?

To Live My Life Again

This is Shreck One come out of South San Francisco. I got three months over, and I can't wait to get the hell out of here and off of probation, to live my life again and to be with my family and my homies out there — and make some money for my family that is hungry.

I love the street so much. I got much respect of people out there, hold it down and doing for the "cause."

People think that I'm a screw up, but I'm not. I'm a soldier for life. I'm stuck in the game doing what I got to do to survive in the street. I'm from South San Francisco where people doing drugs and gangbang is all they have.

Much love and respect to all the homie boys out there.

-Shreck One

From The Beat: You've heard our rap before, Shrek: the streets you are so loyal to don't even belong to you; the city you rep pays the police that wrap you up and throw you away; the homies you rely on will turn on you to save themselves. We wish you could have had our experience today of listening to an OG, a former gangbanger who's paid the price (from juvenile hall to YA to San Quentin to Folsom and, finally, to the Pelican Bay SHU for six years of 23 plus hours a day of solitary confinement). He spoke straight from the heart in his old juvenile hall lockup (his home for more than a year when he was fifteen.) He once thought exactly as you now think ("soldier for life, down for the cause" means something entirely different to me now), but for more than an hour he had every youngster there silent as a church mouse listening to how he moved from that person to the person he is today, the person who recognizes how much more he has in common with every kid raised like you in every 'hood and gang — and that until that lesson of unity is learned, you will always be on the losing end of society. He is now well into a path out of the streets that raised him and into the big (and sometimes scary) world. We wish you could have been there.

You tell me forget
them haters
You keep
me on track

When I Am Doing Good

I love it when I'm doing good and I love it when people around me doing good and doin' the right thing, but I hate it when the people that hate on me are doing well because I'm the type of person that holds a grudge. The reason is because I grew up around haters and when I get hated on for a stupid reason then I get pissed and I start little by little to hate that person with a passion depending who they are. And I notice that it's hard to not back up, but I learned what I need to do and just keep it cool and not say nothing and pay no attention to them, because I know I can be the bigger person and that they're only childish and/or mad at the world.

So if I just don't say anything maybe it would eat the hater up inside 'cause I just can't stand some people like that and I hate when they even look at me. I can't stand little things like that but I'm starting to learn to control myself and not to go off on others, because I know that I grew as a person inside and how to not panic. I love it when I do this, I love when I do that, and I learned how to not to put that hater on his/her back — and that's a fact.

-Ju-Nut

From The Beat: If you really think about it, hate is just another for someone to express jealousy (unless you really did something to that person to make them really hate you). Haters hate because they are jealous of you. They want the competition, the attention, so there is not point of getting mad at someone that is jealous of you. But the flipside is that if you can't stand it, and you make it known how much you hate them haters, it just provides more fuel to the hating fire. You've taken the first step in learning to control yourself; can you take the next and realize that it's not even worth trippin' over?

Keep The Laws The Same

If I could make a law, it would be the same laws we have now 'cause I don't think we should change any law 'cause the laws that we have right now are working.

The police are getting the bad guys and locking them up so we can have a good life without shootings, killings, fights, or gangs. That's all.

-Enele

From The Beat: What can you do to make sure that you are not considered one of the "bad guys"? If the laws are so great, why don't you abide with them?

My Thoughts

If I could make a law it will be that people could not go to the pen for doing bad things, they should put them somewhere for where they could smoke and take a lot of drugs.

-Marcus

From The Beat: Now, do you really mean that? What kind of society will we be living in? How about suggesting another alternative to incarceration?

Legalize Weed

If I could make a law, I would make smoking weed legal! The reason why I would do this, is because weed isn't that bad of a drug, not like coke or ecstasy. Weed actually helps calm a lot of people down and eases tension.

Also if weed was legal, a lot of stuff would be different — a lot of people wouldn't be in jail. For example, people out grinding wouldn't be able to make a profit because weed would be so easy to get. Now, I know, it ain't goin'a happen ... but — only if! (RIP Jerm)

-Lil' B

From The Beat: It could happen; California has medical marijuana laws already. But now, even if it were as legal as alcohol, it wouldn't be legal for minors. You argue well, if too briefly.

What Do They See

To tell you the truth I don't know what my familia see in me, but what ever it is it must be something good because no matter what happens even if I get life, my mom always sees something good within me.

As for my homies they see me as the same homie that kick it every day, at the park BBQ or even walking thru the 'hood. I know that my familia and homies feel the same love that they had when I was on the outs. I know for a fact that my homie would visit me, if they could, in fact I stay writin' my homies and they stay writin' me.

People say that your homies turn their backs on you, well I say that's bull shhh, me and my homies are a familia. I know my familia and homies didn't lose any respect for me at all.

-Negro

From The Beat: Well, since your mother has been there for you through the thick and thin, we hope that you can pay her back for her kindness by staying your butt out of jail. That would make her life easier and make her happy, but you have a loyalty to homies that for some reason or another find themselves a part of the criminal justice system, challenging to say the least.

Decisions Decisions!

The baddest decision I ever made in my life was when I decided to rob someone. That decision was the worst ever, but it has been a good experience.

If I could go back to that day I would've made a better decision than the one I chose.

-Lil' Carlos

From The Beat: What would you have done instead? How do you plan to get your scratch in the future? Are you prepared to get your money in ways that aren't illegal when you get out? How?

The Prejudice Law

If I could make a law, the law that I would make is -- that prejudice should be a strike.

The reason is because it still exists everywhere and ninjas still act like it's over.

-Young Beam

From The Beat: Do you mean that 'prejudging' should be considered a crime by the Justice System? Hmm... interesting. What do you think is a good way to educate people, so that they won't break this law? Is there a way to eliminate stereotypes, so that we don't fall victim to them?

The Drug Law

If I could make a law, the law would be to make drugs legal on the streets and I could not go to jail.

-The Cat In The Hat

From The Beat: What do you think the world would look like if drugs were legal? Would it be an uglier place or a better place?

Decisions

You make a lot of decisions in your life. I don't regret what I did but I wish I didn't do it but some people have to take penitentiary chances just to make it on a day-to-day basis.

Shhh, now I'm in the Hall. That wasn't my decision but shhh happens for a reason. Maybe God did it for me to open my eyes and realize that I'm here for a reason but what is it for me to be lock up... that cant be life!

When I say "I take penitentiary chances on a day-to-day basis just to make it," I'm serious I really do. Some people say they take them but I don't believe them. Why I say I do because of shhh I do — like sell drugs, rob people, and run from police and give fake numbers 'cause I got shhh on me.

-Maurice

From The Beat: We hope that you will find a new way to get by in this world. There's lots to do out there but you gotta be patient

The Same

My family views me the same as always. Just because I came to jail doesn't change their opinion on how they view me. I'm still the same person I was the only thing different is that I matured and got wiser in the mind.

Everyone commits crimes. Ain't no differences. The people in here just got caught — that's the only difference. I didn't lose no respect from my folks, they still have the same respect 'cause we grew up together in the same 'hood, and we always had each other's back since day one.

There is some people that do change like them shady fools out there that act like they don't know you no more, but that ain't no thang 'cause them won't help you get to the top, which is where I'm going, this is just a pit stop.

Ain't no stopping me from reaching the top of the game. I'm gonna feel like I'm on top of the world, time, patience, and I'm there. I'm out...

-Lil' John

From The Beat: We totally disagree with your statement, that "everyone commits crimes." Sorry... many young and old people who have committed crimes have made family and friends question their motives, so they are looked upon differently. And if you are going to make such a statement of how everyone commits crimes, better give some examples, 'cause not everyone finds themselves in jail. Never the less, we hope that you do get to the top! What are your plans for getting there? What kind of changes do you need to make if you're going to make it to the top? How can you be there for your family? In which ways have you got wiser in the mind?

Weed Law

If I could make a law it will be people can smoke weed and you can drink underage, and you can kill. Poor people can eat free and smoke coca. If a kid don't go to school they will work for two hours.

-Vk

From The Beat: Now why would you want a law that would make it legal to kill people? Please explain if it would have to be under certain circumstances only or not. What would the world be like if kids could drink and smoke at 9 or 10 years old?

"If"

If I could make a law, I would be rich by now — 'cause my law would be that drugs would be on the streets! Legal to sell!

'Cause that's how most of my friends and I get our money in this city of haters. I like money! So that's why I do what I do now.

I hope that some laws would really change — so things will get better for my friends and me. If I could make a law, I wouldn't be in jail right now, or on my way to CYA for running from Camp.

-Lil' See-Money

From The Beat: We, too, would like to see things get better for you and your friends. But running away from reality will only defeat you in the end. Make up your mind to get your money another way, so you can have money and freedom, too — okay?

Good News Today

What's up, this Green Eyes about to write a little something so check it out!

Well, first off it ain't good news about me but it's good news about my dad! Well I called my nana today and she said that my dad got "11 months" and only got half time which is only "6 months" and he's been in Santa Rita for 3 months so his other 3 months are goin' to be done in Tracy (D.V.I.) prison! So he should be out by November if he doesn't catch any time!

Well me, I find out what's up with me on the 29th of July. I might go home on the 29th but if not I'm goin' to a placement but I got to wait and find out!

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: It's sad that you and your father are both locked up. Any desire to break the cycle of incarceration? How can the two of you both be together as a family? Hopefully he's reading your words right now and it sends him a mental message too.

I Regret

I regret
That I drank and smoked that night
I regret
Ever going to that place
I regret
Not thinkin' ahead
I regret
Actin' a fool
I regret
Being around them squares
I don't regret
Robbing them squares
I regret robbing these squares
I don't regret
The thing I did
I regret

The events that led up to the thang I did!

-Big Samoa

From The Beat: We always like reading your weekly poems on our third topics. How can you make sure that your future isn't filled with regrets?

Everyone commits crimes.

First-Timers and the Law

I've never been in trouble with the law until now, but I think the law can still be used to help other people.

The law I would pass, would be that first-timers in jail should not do more than a month — because usually they learn after their first time.

-Dario

From The Beat: *Provided there is follow-up, counseling or peer-group support, after release — that first time locked up can be a major motivator! But learning is a process, don't you think?*

Rest In Peace, Jerm

I just want to say RIP to my bra-bra, Jerm, who passed away. That just goes to show that people can't never shine in these Oakland streets without getting knocked.

But all haters need to know that what goes around comes around. So I'm a keep doing this till I stop breathing. So to my bra, rest in peace. I'm a always keep our good times in my head. Love you, Jeremee. Rest In Peace: Jeremee Tims 9/29/88 – 6/2/04.

-Lil' B

From The Beat: *When you're in your room, beginning to fall asleep, listen carefully, and you might hear differently from Jeremee: "Get out the game; it ain't worth the pain." RIP Jerm.*

Why Is It

that people want
what i got but
can't appreciate
what they got
'cause maybe they're
envious and jealous
okay but why
what i got ain't
really hard to get
it just takes work
and effort
tell me why
people get mad
when they see
me shining

-Lil' Mama Hanna

From The Beat: *If you mean shining on the grind, well — that's what the game does to a player's mind. But if you mean shining from the inside out, with confidence you can turn your life about — well then, they don't understand 'cause they're so afraid they can't.*

Hall Life

i'm here at the hall
stuck behind these walls
all these ten-minute showers
and our rec' for an hour
these nasty meals
and our letters
that we cannot seal
our store night / video night
sometimes kids fight
but it's coo'
'cause i'm 'bout to leave
and you best believe
i got something up my sleeve

-Lil' June

From The Beat: *Just make sure it's not a blunt up your sleeve, 'cause you're getting this one last chance to succeed: Camp, then Job Corps, then free — no more locked doors! Let it be.*

you best
believe

That Decision

Well this is Green Eyes about to write on this topic.

Well the decisions that I make I never regret because if I'm making a decision about it I must be doin' for a reason, because everything I do is for a very good reason. Feel me?! I'm out!

RIP Flip, Speedy, Ricky Sr., Uncle Tony.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: *Explain a time when you did something for a very good reason. Sometimes we do something for what we think are good reasons but it still don't work. What is your good reason behind all your actions?*

What's Up

What's up? How you been doing? Me, as you see, not so good; because I'm here in max! I caught a case on my home pass from Camp.

They talkin' about CYA, but I don't know. I went to court, and they said come back in two weeks for my pre-trial. So what's up with your case? Hopefully, it all goes coo' with you.

I hope I go back to Camp, so I could just pimp my program.

Well, whatever happens, just stay coo' and don't let no one get you down. Remember this game ain't nothing nice, so play your cards right. Keep your head up. With much love and respect.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: *Because you want what's best for yourself and for your homies, (which we cut out) in the Hall and at Camp, you've got to stretch your vision beyond the twists and turns of living in the system. You've even got to see beyond "pimpin' your program" if you do go back to Camp — you've got to see your way to change how you play your cards when you're home free, to stay free.*

The Definition of a Ripper

The definition of a ripper is a girl who can't make up her mind about who she wanna be with — and gives sex at the press of a button! A girl who only wants you for material things!

A ripper is a female who sleeps with more than three dudes in a week. And a supreme ripper is a female that sleeps with more than twenty in a year. In my book, eighty-five per cent of Oakland females are rippers. I know that is a mean thing to say, but I'm afraid it's a fact.

I think y'all need better parenting or something — because y'all be getting ripped. All I'm saying to Oakland females is to slow down. Anyway, this is my definition of a ripper.

-Pierre

From The Beat: *Turn around the gender of what you're talking about, and you wouldn't call him a ripper but a pimp. So, now, if Oakland males would just stop trying to be big pimps all the time.... Let's apply your definition: Using a female for material things and trying to be with, to quote you, "more than three ... in a week ... more than twenty in a year" — pimp = ripper! Better parenting would be cool; so would better partnering.*

Too Bad

i got to camp june twenty-first
so i've been here about a month and three weeks
i got an extra-short program
but yesterday i was laying on my bed
and i heard over the intercom
nicholas — / thunder road
i was real mad 'cause this means i will not
get released for another four months

-Nicholas

From The Beat: *Waste your time for those four months, and it's a crime against yourself. But if you put in work and learn to stay clean and sober — your doing time might be over, forever!*

I Can See You!

The only people I think will see me differently — but not in a bad way — would have to be my friends 'cause they be doing all the same shhh but not as bad as me. But they'll probably just look at me like I'm crazy but they won't see me differently.

Only person that will see me differently would be my brother 'cause he never thought that I would do some crazy shhh like that, but now I think he respects me a little more. I mean he won't look at me like a little punk and he won't treat me like a little kid anymore. But as for my dad, my mom, and my girl — they will always love me no matter what.

-Lil' Carlos

From The Beat: *Not a lot of people have a dad, mom and a girl to support them. Do you feel grateful for these people? How do you show them appreciation? Do you think it's right for your brother to gain respect for you because you've gotten locked up? In what other ways do you think you could have earned his respect?*

Young Gato's Thinkin'

What's crackin'! It's me Young Gato, chillin' right here. Well, I just want to tell you about some things I was thinkin'.

It's a trip how you get in the system and you can't get out! I started off in B-unit; then went to A-unit; after that, C-unit; then moved my way up to max-4 — and now I'm in max-3! It's kinda like school and graduating to the next grade. But in a messed-up way, you know?

These last two years, I've been livin' that County life — in and out the Hall; then Camp; now back here! This is my second summer in the Hall. I need to be out there with my homies, females and some cold ones. Instead, I'm chillin' here, watchin' time go by and wasting the best days of my life.

I can't complain, because I take responsibility for my actions. To all, stay up!

-Young Gato

From The Beat: *Until you wake up, you'll stay sleeping in the system. You can no longer afford to just keep going back to the same old same on the outs, kicking it with the homeboys and homegirls while soaking brew. You've got to make a change and put some effort into living a productive life. That's what being responsible for your actions means! To take responsible action!*

Life At Fred Finch

Life at Fred Finch is pretty hard. It's hard not to start smoking, because about eighty per cent of the kids smoke there — and staff don't do nothing to stop it.

Kids always fighting! Gangs coming up there and beating the crap out of us! Kids always AWOL'ing, staff just sleeping on the job. Other kids breaking in your room in the middle of the night, trying to steal yo' stuff.

You always have to watch yo' back, twenty-four/seven. You always have to have at least one patna to have yo' back. I ain't going back to that crazy place! But I'm going to miss my homies, Flaco and Hing and Lil' Lo. Peace out!

-Lil' Hot Sauce

From The Beat: *We're sorry to hear that things can get so out of control there. But it's better to share the news, so anyone going there knows the truth. Maybe it won't be as bad as what happened to you. We've heard of folks coming through all right. But if it's this bad, that is concerning, you should inform your PO and your lawyer so they can investigate the matter further.*

I Wish

I wish I were at home with family who are going to Florida next week, but too bad. I should have been smart enough to not do the crime, but I gots to do the time.

-G-Money

From The Beat: *You reap what you sow, — and old saying. How can you make sure that you don't put yourself in similar situations in the future?*

To The Beat Within

Hey! What's up with y'all? Well, me, nothing — in my room, because I got an hour today at school. So sorry I'm not out there, but man! I need some help, a'ight?

Here, check it out, a'ight. Most of the homies be saying, the eff with a female; but me — I am a caring and a loving person. And I got this one girl I love. Her name is Brenda, right.

So, the thing I'm asking help, is about — I used to live in Hayward, and so does my girl. But now my mom just moved to Burlingame. So now me and my girl, is gonna be living hella far from each other; an' I don't know if I should still be with her or end it.

We been going out for almost eight months, but man — Beat, I'm stuck! Can you help me out a little bit? Like give me some ideas. The reason why I'm asking y'all this, is because I don't know who to turn to right now. If I ask the homeboys, they're just gonna clown; but I ain't tripping. So can y'all help a homie out?

Oh, to let you know a lil' something 'bout me, is, I'm seventeen 'bout to be eighteen on October twenty-second; 'bout to get my L's when I get to a weekend pass from Camp; an' I got a 2003 Kia Sephia — so yeah, I got a car but no L's.

So, till next time, Beat, thanks — and write back. Oh! Check out the drawings I did for y'all! So, peace, Beat.

-Culero

From The Beat: In case you're looking for it, we didn't print the lyric you turned in, 'cause it's by Ashanti. Sorry, but The Beat's for your writings. Anyway, as to your predicament: Don't make any decisions now. You'll be at Camp for a while, and you can talk things over with her when you get those weekend home passes (just don't get too many write-ups, and no 'dirties' — but if you do, chill 'cause there's always the next weekend). If it's true love, you two can make it work, especially after you get your license to roll across the Hayward/San Mateo Bridge.

**I'm missin' you
'cause this life
really hurts.
We got memories
'cause we put yo'
face on a shirt**

I've Tried But ...

i've tried to change but i never could
maybe there's something i misunderstood
i've tried to do right but i always do wrong
then i tell myself to stay strong
i've tried to listen to what the adults say
but i was raised a whole different way
i've tried not to smoke
i've tried not to drink

that way i could go home on my h v
but there are all these things that get in
my way

well at least i can say i've tried
what else can i say

-Lil' Joey

From The Beat: What you need to say is you'll continue to try; and when obstacles get in your way, you'll learn to pass them by! If you were raised a whole different way, it's going to take some day-after-day's to make the lessons stay. But it's worth it, okay; or your life and your freedom you'll fritter away.

Physical Vs. Mental

I'm a Mexican and in this lifestyle we live, you have to have both — physical and mental strength. Physical strength because you have to be ready for whatever comes down and handle it.

Mental strength because if you get locked up with solitary confinement you have to be able to stay strong like a soldier.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Well, we hope that you will be smart enough to use your mental strength to keep yourself out of jail. How can you utilize both of your strengths?

My Words

My words sound like rusty siding on a county chicken coop flapping, rattling, clattering

Solitude walking in the sand-blowing wind and weeds roaming the ghosts of my heart. Digging up bones of the past.

-Negro

From The Beat: Nice poem. What can you do to confront the bones of the past? Will the bones disintegrate in due time?

RIP

Rest in peace to my homies in the dirt

I'm missin' you 'cause this life really hurts.

We got memories 'cause we put yo' face on a shirt

Remember the girls we shared and the females we twerked

But wearing that shirt only makes your memories hurt

But when I look to the sky I see your reflection and it hurts but once again I say rest in peace to my homies in the dirt.

-Boog Money

From The Beat: Did you learn anything from the death of your homies or have they all died in vain? How do you deal with the pain? How can you make sure that the memories never rove?

**I would like it if y'all would make a
subject that I really feel**

Streets

The streets ain't no game

But when I was in them, I seen a lot folks go thru pain

But on the block I'm the real King James

But it goes back to when I bought my first zip and bagged up my first ounce

The streets made me but the streets don't get announced

The 'hood get the credit and the OG's get the fame

But you open the 'hood history books you see me: King James. RIP Diddy and Uncle Lou-Booty

-Boog Money

From The Beat: When you look back at where the streets, which you do not own, have taken you — do you like the destination? As a child, we all had dreams — was being a king of the streets a part of your dreams?

To The Beat

What's up y'all? I'm mad at y'all! Why don't y'all put my writing in The Beat?

And I don't like the subjects y'all make us write about, like "the victim" — or, "if you could make a law" — y'all know we will never be able to make a law! And you know darn well we don't care about the victim.

I would like it if y'all would make a subject that I really feel, to write about!

-Maurice

From The Beat: (1) Unless you're making murder threats or just representing your crew, we do print you; and write back, too! (2) Our subjects are not mandatory. (3) Read The Beat: some folks have learned to care, and that's a start on learning how to stay out of here.

Stressed-Out

Hey, what is going on, Beat? This is Lil' Chris aka Culero.

I just want to say that I'm all stressed out 'cause I have not left for Camp yet — and don't know when I'm leaving! So like I said, I'm stressed out! Well that is all for now, Beat. Thank you guys very much!

Oh, and I want to tell Fat Juan, Young Smokey and Lil' Gato, all sitting at the table here with me as I write this — that you are my best friends and good luck!

-Culero

From The Beat: We hope by the time you're reading this, you're chilling at Camp after your first visit home! Now do a good program, so you can go home to stay.

News Today

What crackin'? This the homie Green Eyes about to write about a little something, check it out. Well today my PO came to talk to me and he said that I got a group home release but because the judge hatin' on me I ain't goin' home.

So now I got to do like 6 months then I'ma be back where them young homies don't listen.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Well, good luck at your group home and we hope you make the best of your time there. Don't run cause you already know the consequences, then again, you don't listen, so in time you'll be back writing in The Beat. Remember, live and learn and move on; break the chains of incarceration.

Flows

No ball playin' snitch

Take the ball to the fence

I flow like I had Biggie Smalls evidence

When I lust a chick I leave no wall evidence.

When I start rappin', you been small eva since.

So it proves ya brain is as small as an inch

Every where I go ninjas and chickens jealous

I keep my business on the low 'cause ninjas get to tellin'.

In the 'hood if you snitchin', well split ya melon

Narrow lanes, big range, neva hit the railin'.

My flow let you have it if you get to yellin'.

First there was silence now sirens, now get to bailin'.

Want have to rest to switch hands

Six mill-i-on reasons you should switch plans

It a happen all too fast

To withstand like it's been brass, chewed glass

It stand, thinkin' it a all sink like quick sand,

I walk down tha block with my stomach in knots.

A yo, I ain't gone front all I want is a blunt

A pair of blue and yellow Dunks and my hundreds in chunks,

But people see me put the purse ta the front

I'm wakin' up early the rest of the month.

I put my life on the line, I ain't making a dime

Ninjas call me, never mind, ya wasting ya time.

-Sinsir

From The Beat: This flow is dope and you seriously got mad skills but if your actions reflect what you talk about in here, we believe that your future will be going nowhere fast. Anyways, we suggest you utilize your writing skills and put your energy in a more positive place.

Let Youth Marry

If I could make a law, it's that young people could get married because lots of young in love would like to get married from the ages 12-17. I think they should get married so they stay longer with each other and have kids young.

-Jonathan B1

From The Beat: This is an interesting suggestion, Jonathan, but if 12-year-olds should be allowed to marry, should they also be allowed to drink, or serve in the military? Don't you think young teenagers are still developing mentally, emotionally and physically? What's wrong with waiting until the process of maturing is completed?

The Real From The Fake

The time you find out your real homies is on your most hurtful times. In any bad situation, you can talk to a real homie and he or she can understand you, whether it's about you getting dissed by a girl, beat up by someone smaller than you, or anything that may seem embarrassing. A real homie will understand when it's time to joke or whether shhh is real.

Like for me, only my true homies keep in contact and stay checking up on my personal things, like making sure my family is good, and my son is cool while I'm in here. Don't mean that I'm "happy," but don't get me wrong, I appreciate it.

But I'm still hurting because I'm away. That's it.

-Young Fatz B5

From The Beat: Who wouldn't be hurting, especially when they are away from their child? And we agree with you, it is in times of stress and difficulty when your true friends become known.

Wonder Of The Outs!

While I've been in here, gone for so long, away from everybody and everything I love, the game for life has had its ups and downs for a young Hispanic male. The girl I once called love is "gone with the wind." I guess it was never love to begin with.

My right hand man "E" got his life straight. I ain't mad at him. I think that's the best thing he's done since I can remember. There's other things I would like to say, but I'm not.

Everything is changing out there. I just wonder what the world got in store for a young man like me. I guess I'm just gone have to wait and see.

-Noriega B5

From The Beat: You say, "Everything is changing out there," which, of course, it is. But we'd be interested to know what is changing in you? Is change a good thing or a bad thing? Do you want things to change or to stay the same? Why?

Retaliation Is A Must

I feel retaliation is a must where I come from because I feel if you take one of mine I'm gone take ten of yours.

Sometimes when I retaliate I don't think, I just do. Being in here makes me think I should start to think about stuff before I do it.

I feel no remorse for my enemies because all of my enemies are someone that has done something to me or took someone from me. If one of my enemies dies or gets hurt, a smile comes to my face. Sometimes that scares me that I would enjoy another person's death, but then again, I don't care 'cause they didn't care when my ninja's died.

When I get out I'm gone be cool for a minute, but ain't nothing gone change 'cause retaliation is a must. TIP Jay O, Mike, Jarv, Wax, and Larry, I'm taking ten for one of my ninjas.

-D-Nasty B5

From The Beat: How do enemies become enemies? Do you ever think about that? Does calling someone an enemy mean they aren't human? If we keep killing each other — they take one of yours, you take 10 of theirs, then they take 10 more of yours — is it ever going to stop? Or does it just goes on and on and on until when? Three to four generations down? Guess that's how it should be then, huh, until even our grandchildren and their grandchildren pay with their lives. While you cry for your homies, do you ever think about your enemies' loved ones who cry for them? Who are you really hurting?

Make Juvenile Hall Tougher

I would make a law that includes some restrictions for minors. My law would make the minors stay in Juvenile Hall twice as long for whatever crime they committed than they would now. My law would make all minors have a curfew at 7:00 unless they're with their parents. My law would strictly prohibit minors to cut school.

A minor should go to juvenile hall for at least a week for cutting school. If a minor is doing poor in school he/she should definitely get attention, and if he continues doing poor that minor should get some consequences.

There also should be stricter rules in Juvenile Hall! For example more time in their rooms, less communicating between each other. This way the detainees can get their minds together. There is more to that, but all those laws are for better society in the future.

The kids are having too much fun these days. Most of them are not doing homework and cut school. If kids were focusing on education everything would be fine. The biggest problem of these lost, clueless kids are drugs and media. If that could be eliminated everything would change a lot.

-JJ B1

From The Beat: Do you think you would be a better person if you had twice the time to do in juvenile hall that you have now? Do you think punishing kids for not going to school is the best way to make them want to go to school? Why do kids cut school in the first place? Have the punishments you've received (for cutting school or for any other reason) been the most effective things to change your behavior? If punishment is the way, then why do so many young people just keep coming back to it? Looking only at yourself, what do you think is the best way for you to learn what you need to learn and behave as you need to behave?

Think

I regret coming in here for a gun case.

I regret not running from the police when he pulled out his gun while he hopped out the car.

I regret leaving off the block and not goin' to the Omega Boys Club on July 6, 2004.

I regret not listening to the homies when they told me to get in the van.

I regret a lot of stuff I did in my lifetime

The only thing I can say is think before you act

-O-Nasty B5

From The Beat: We certainly agree with your advice, O-Nasty, but we have to ask you why you didn't follow it before? Didn't you already know it's better to think before you act? So, what's going to make you do it this time? Do you regret carrying the gun, or just getting caught? (By the way, we DON'T regret that you didn't run from the gun-toting cop; we've seen too many examples of cops using those guns on fleeing suspects...)

Let Kids Drive

If I could make a law it will be that kids 14-18 can be able to have a car and be able to drive a car. Some kids do not like to drive with their parents. That is why kids should have cars.

-Sean B1

From The Beat: Why do you think drivers under the age of 21 have more accidents than any other age group? Do you think young people respect the rules of the road as much as more mature adults do? What about you? Do you like driving faster than the speed limit? How fast do you like to go?

Three Years If You Return To The Hall

If you could make a law my law would be if a person came back here it would be a maximum three years in YGC. Yes the law will definitely work for me and other people. My law would be to let the girls come to Omega boys club. You damn right but it would be longer than a week a year in Juvenile Hall. The reason why because they don't show enough mercy for us up in this lousy place.

Yes I think everybody should have their college tuition paid. That would be marvelous. That would be very great in a real way. I would definitely change the law about the three strikes policy.

-Troy B1

From The Beat: If they don't show you enough mercy in that place, why do you want to make someone who returns do three years? We think it would be great if college tuition was free, but would that make you go? Before you got wrapped, were you going to school every day? It's free! How would you change the law about three strikes?

Everything
is
changing
out there.

The Stranger Beside Me

(Dedicated to Alicia)

What would I have done if I never met you? Shhh, a homie was down and out, feeling that life was hopeless. But you, the stranger beside me, was there for me.

When a ninja was feeling hopeless and felt like he had nothing to lose and nothing to gain, you, the stranger beside me, was there to pick a ninja up and make him feel good.

I see it as you just found yourself something good, like a lost treasure you've been looking for your whole life. It's funny how God makes things happen, 'cause now I feel like I was put here for a reason — to be with the stranger beside me.

But now I ask myself a question: Why am I back where it all started? This is how everything started and it ended all bad. Now that I feel something good for a stranger, I wonder where it's going to go. Now God knows what the future holds in store for me and you, the stranger beside me.

-Noriega B5

From The Beat: Even though you plagiarized the title of your piece from Ann Rule's book, The Stranger Beside Me, we know you didn't plagiarize what you wrote, so we are publishing it. (It would be better to pick your own title, and your own phrase to describe that person beside you.) Why do you describe this person as a stranger? What is it about her that drew you together? Where do you think you'll both be in a year?

Letter To My Lil' Brah

Lil' Brah, wha's good, ninja? Quit cATTin' off and get out, Lil' Brah. I'm kickin' it through.

Hopefully, I get out in a minute if everything is good, and be back.

Get out and stay out when you do, and I'll see you back in the grimeiest. Be easy and knock that out. I'm finna get on. One love, my young ninja.

-Young Fatz B5

From The Beat: All good advice, Young Fatz. Will you be able to follow it?

**I'm pregnant now
and I'm 'a make sure
that my child doesn't
ever experience
the horror
I've been through!**

Babydaddy

Babydaddy ain't shhh

Never going to be shhh

Because they daddy ain't shhh

So why I have to put up with that shhh

With that pimp shhh

-Lil' Princess GU

From The Beat: You're right, no woman should put up with "pimp shhh," and if no women did, they couldn't get away with it. But are there any good baby daddies out there? And if there aren't, why are girls having sex with them?

My Lifestyle

Wuz up Beat readers. My name is Alicia. I'm a Latina straight from the Mission. I'm 'a tell y'all a story about my life. I started gangbanging at a young age. I was always on the block 24-7. I was a little bad-ass, drinking 40 oz of MGD. All the homies used to call it Mission gangsta drank. I always used to get drunk with my crime patna at the park. I used to start boxing with the homeboys 'cause the homegirls were no match against me at the time when I used to be drunk.

Well, Beat readers, this piece is to be continued.

-Alicia GU

From The Beat: We look forward to hearing more about your life. Why do you think you used to get drunk so much and fight so much? Could you hang out with these folks and not drink and fight?

If I Could Go Home

If I could go home

I would change a lot

If I could go home

I wouldn't hang on da block

If I could go home

I would value my time

If I could go home

I wouldn't commit no crimes

If I could go home

I would have a blast

If I could go home

Juvenile would be the last

If I could go home

It definitely would change me a lot

Because there's nothing like home

Not even the block

-Choppa B4

From The Beat: Nice rhyme. Just those few sentences say a lot. What else would you do if you could go home? You will be home one day. Will you remember all that you "would" do when it's time to do it?

Why Me?

Why did I have to do that crime?

Why was I where I was at, at that specific time?

Why do I act like I do?

Why don't they believe what I say is true?

Why I gotta live like this?

Why God put me through this shhh?

Why am I here on this earth?

Why wasn't I a good kid?

Why didn't I go to church?

Why did I have to do this?

Why did I have to do that?

Why me?

Why me?

Somebody please tell me why?

-Drama B5

From The Beat: No one can answer or tell you why, only you can. Only you know yourself the most, so we ask you, why you? And even if you don't know the answer to all these questions (who knows God's plan?), we're sure you know the answer to some of them. And if you don't, keep asking.

I Feel

I feel I'm my own victim and my family. The reason I feel that way is because I'm hurting myself my being in YGC. And in the same way I hurt my family.

I'm angry at myself because I know I can do better than the stuff I was doing on the outs. So when I get out I'm going to finish High School, go to city college and learn a trade to be an engineer or electronic.

-Blank B4

From The Beat: That's a good sign, knowing/recognizing your wrongs before getting out. As long as you know the potential you have and are willing to work towards your goal, this should be your last visit to YGC, know what we mean?

To Hell Back Up To
Heaven With A Gift

I done been through a lot of stuff that people shouldn't be goin' through in a lifetime. I done met and experienced things that people I grew up around can't even relate to! The bottom line is I done went to hell and back!

I'm pregnant now and I'm 'a make sure that my child doesn't ever experience the horror I've been through! I'm 'a be givin' things to my unborn child that my mom couldn't even give me. I done got abused physically, emotionally by an older man that I thought loved me, and truthfully, I've just been used. I'll be damned if someone tried to do that to my child, 'cause there will be some problems when I find out. I don't want no one to harm my child in any way shape or form. My babydaddy is also gon' be hell a overprotective of our kid. That's why I love him and I chose to have his baby!

-Lil' Guess GU

From The Beat: We hope you can protect your child and yourself in the way you describe here. What do you think you'll need to do differently than your mom? How can you tell that the man you're with now will treat you and your child well? What steps will you be willing to take if he changes in ways you don't like?

Struggle

We all struggle trying to live life as a thug but turn snitch when you feel the slugs enter yo' mug When will you learn this street life ain't going to pay off

Lil' kids dying from the AKs getting let off

Yeah, I lost two homies but I keep my head up

try not to get fed up

While I'm out here on the block I'm going to get my bread up Holla.

-Young Slim B4

From The Beat: You already lost the two homies to the street and you haven't learned yet? What will it take, Young Slim?

Hoping For The Best

I went to court today with so many thoughts running through my head. One thought was where's the court gonna send me now, since I'm 18, and I failed the Ranch. My PO and attorney's trying to get me to stay here for 90 days and have the courts dismiss my case.

I go back to court on the 18th and I'm hoping for the best, which is for the courts to dismiss my case so I can go home on probation.

Everything's looking good over this way and I'm hoping Lil' Mouse, you up there not cATTing off like I was 'cause I want you to come home at the same time I touch down so I could show you what it do, youngsta. Always your big homie...

-Weasel B5

From The Beat: We hope you get what you want, Weasel, but we're wondering why you failed the Ranch, and how you feel about giving advice that you, yourself, didn't follow? Getting your case dismissed is a short-term goal. Got any long-term ones?

If I Could Make A Law

I would change the Prop. 21 law that is juveniles can be charged as adults. And I would change three strikes.

I would change the Prop. 21 law because the lawmakers, judges whoever else, have no idea how that feels, 16-year-old kids facing pen time. Not YA, but prison time. Who the hell decided that? I would change it because this is my first real serious case, and they not even gone try to see if I'm gonna change. They trying to get rid of me before they know what I'm about.

I would change three strikes because let's say I caught a possession of firearm, and discharge of firearm in a public place case and get two strikes. Then, five years later I catch a ride with a friend trying to go home after work, and he has a gun with a murder on it and other illegal things I don't know about, I might be down the rest of my life for trying to get home faster. That's just not fair to me or anybody else.

-No Name B4

From The Beat: So how would you re-write the law? Or would you just eliminate it? Could teenagers still be tried as adults? Are there any other laws you'd like to change?



I Am The Victim

I am the victim. I let myself fall into their trap to get me incarcerated. I can't have contact with my so-called victims because I had a restraining order held against me which does not allow me to contact them.

I love it when shhh get so hot that people can't do shhh but stay and deal with it. I love it when I get ta holler at my fam.

-Diamond PG B4

From The Beat: Why do you call them your "so-called" victims? Sounds like you're trying to evade responsibility. If, and we are just saying if, there was not a restraining order, what would you say to them? Would you explain to them why you did what you did? Would you ask how their life has been affected because of your action? Sometimes our human conscience haunts us for the bad things we've done, and one way to solve that is to deal or face up to it.

Time Is Ticking

What's up Beat and the homies in the units? This is Young Clap in B1. Me, I'm on my way home. I been in this BS for like 70 something days, mad is hell because there are no girls or money, or no money for me to make.

Time is ticking for me. I don't know because I'm going back on the streets, and I don't know if I'm going to do right. I'm going back to the block with the same homies in the streets getting the same money. This time is just stopping my money. But when I get back it's on to all the homies.

-Lil' Clap B1

From The Beat: Yes, time is ticking, Lil' Clap, and if you continue down this path, you'll be looking back on this time from behind four cold walls wondering where it went. You're mad as hell, but who are you mad at? You're committed to going back to the block, which is another way of saying you're committed to coming back here (or worse). You say you don't know if you're going to do right, but that's just another way of saying you know you're going to do wrong. If you think that there will be different consequences the next time, it means you've learned nothing from the consequences this time. Of course, you're not alone, Lil' Clap, and maybe that makes it okay to give up your freedom so easily. Here you have homies, so maybe here you feel like home. What a tragedy!

In Too Deep

Wit' my enemies close to me thug like

I supposed to be posted,
like I posted smokin' dosha

where the soldiers be stayin' away from ninjas that snitch,
keeping these up out my mixed,
kickin' in doors looking for kicks
down and dirty I'm tryna get rich

I gotta stay pack wit' my pistol and grab

I'm a ninja that don't be having no respect for wheneva

I'm saving

whateva happen happens

I'm in too deep to be tripping that shhh

-Dwonner B1

From The Beat: We had to take out the last part of your poem because it was nothing more than a threat. The only thing you're in too deep is a mindset that keeps you from exploring the world outside your little click. And that's too bad, because it's a big world with lots of different people and ideas and beliefs — and yours are not "right" just because they're yours, and theirs are not wrong just because it's theirs! You don't "gotta stay packed," you choose to, and there's a big difference. Until you own your responsibility, you will remain stuck in that limited experience. The tragedy is that you find it easier to give up your freedom and allow yourself to be a slave (of the system) than to make the difficult choices that lead to an educated mind, that makes for real leadership instead of following the pack. Yes, it's hard to make other choices, but pretending that you are "in too deep" to choose anything else is a copout!

Hard Living

When them schools get shot, there is no one to run to no need to cry for your mom because only God can help you staying alive. True to the game can get you two the brain.

It's no turning back when you in too deep. Got to watch your back so you can't even sleep. I tell you because I know it's hard on these streets. They make it hard for us to even get a dollar and get something to eat.

I know we gone make it, but to keep it real, it's hard on this street.

-Lil Dakota B4

From The Beat: The street is hard, and it doesn't care about you. Only you can care about yourself. But even though we know how hard the streets can be, we think it's a cop out to say you're in too deep to turn back. We've known people in far, far deeper than you could possibly be at your age, and for their own reasons, they found a way out. If you are determined, you can do anything you want.

The Victim

(Dedicated to The Beat Within)

If I had a chance to meet my victim's family, I would not agree to. They would probably be some one who wanted to hurt and attack me. Why give a damn about my victim? I surely wouldn't have any words for him or her.

In the event of the future it would depend on the circumstances between us two that would make me feel remorse. My advice to my victims would be to get over it as best as possible or it will eat them up. They might go crazy and lose their damn minds. I would not let anger become a barrier between my judgments at the time upon setting an example for the rest to follow.

My victim is the devil.

-Unknown Writer

From The Beat: Sometimes, trying to be clever with words is just a way not to face our own actions and their consequences on others. How is the devil your victim, unless you plan to attack the devil, which would make him your victim (and we don't think that's what brought you here)? Did you ever try putting yourself in your victim's shoes? It is not an easy thing to do, but until you can do that, you can't really say you have faced your responsibility for your actions.

Perfect

Perfect ya never been right was crazy coming into life. Pops deposits me ta mom's. When he left I had ta grow up so that tha next door neighbor wouldn't take my sis fa a ho' show or tha block ho'. Never thought I was slick or sick, so was always dippin' an searching my shhh, and when we got too rowdy the 5-0 would beat me then arrest me fa resisting arrest, burglary, on some shhh. Got caught stealing so I didn't make it that far.

-Diamond PG B4

From The Beat: Some people just don't see the struggle we have to go through and where some of us come from. So all we can do is act in a way we believe is right — and take what consequences come with our actions.

Temptation

Well, let me begin by writing about an example of my point to this article.

Okay, let us say there is a man and a woman that want a serious relationship with each other. So they both agree and make up rules so they may live in peace for the while they're together, rules like you can not touch another. That is mainly the most important in this example.

Say the guy one afternoon is with his amigos, and they have plans for a Friday night. They want to go clubbing, and afterwards set up an after party. So the woman already is thinking of plans and is thinking on going to watch a movie at the new movie theater, dinner at a fancy Thai food restaurant and sex afterwards because she thinks he deserves it.

But he made up a white lie and told her, "Dad needs an extra hand at work that night, maybe the next day." Wanting not to disagree, she agreed and stayed home that night. Finally the big night is here, guy's already on the dance floor, drinking pints of Hennessey and Hypnotiq. He is looking at all the girls that have tight mini skirts, shirts that barely cover their chest and stomach. So he is dancing with this one girl that has a skirt, no panties, no bra so her breast are very noticeable. So the weed he's been smoking, the drink in his system made him forget about his girl at home. What he does not know is this girl is drunk too, and her boyfriend is stalking her all night.

So this guy's dancing and is sexually active now. Now he is grabbing the girl and trying to get her to have sex. They boyfriend sees this, gets real mad goes and hits the guy in the nose so he drops. Then guy's friends see this and beat him till cops arrive. Now guy is in jail, probably for life because boyfriend is near death, so no sex or fun for a while.

This is what he gets from temptation. He could have had a nice good evening but is now not making it home for a couple years. And his girl's heartbroken. All because of temptation.

-Anonymous B4

From The Beat: Nice story which does get a certain point across. But temptation comes our way all the time. Is the moral of this story that we should not give in to temptation, or that he shouldn't have lied to her in the first place (when he wasn't high or drunk)?

It's no turning back when you in too deep. Got to watch your back so you can't even sleep.

Can't Wait To Get Out

I can't wait to get out of this place...My PO just told me that if my case ain't gonna be a felony, I'll be going home. But if it is then his recommendation is Log Cabin Ranch. But everybody else said I'm too young to go to the Ranch and they said I might be going to a group home.

I just wish that I'm out right now.

-BG B1

From The Beat: Getting out is only a matter of time. But staying out is a matter of will, a matter of choice. Will you remember how you feel now once you're on the streets again? Will it make you change anything in your life? If not, we'll be seeing you again...

The Victim

When I first seen my victims, I didn't know they were snitches, so me and my boy stopped them and took out they pockets. They must have been really scared because they did it with a quickness.

Forget those tricks. I am never going to see or talk to them ever. I have never done it yet. All I did was hear their voices at court and the crime. Don't they realize that one day I'm gonna get out. I bet by the time I get out they won't remember.

At the time I didn't care about them being robbed. Hell, I've never been robbed. If they do remember me, I hope they can forgive me because I really don't care about what they do now. The school they went to was in a city that I attended for 5-1/2 months and they picked me out of the yearbook.

They probably think I'm the worst person in the world. One thing this taught me is that I'm not going to do anything that can come back to me like that did.

-AP

From The Beat: You never know what people will think or do in the future. If you sincerely wish for their forgiveness, it really doesn't matter whether they give it or not, or if they remember you or not. That's on them. Your thoughts and deeds are on you. If you're ashamed of something you've done or regretful, the best thing is not to do it in the future so you won't have anything to regret.

When Will I Leave

Was up Beat? This is Mr. Indio from the streets of Redwood City, still stuck up in the hall. I've been in here for a minute now and I'm just waiting for them to sentence me. It probably takes awhile because I'm being tried as an adult, but shhh, they need to hurry up so I can start my time. Feel me.

My lawyer is trying to recommend me to CYA instead of doing time in the pinta. To me it really doesn't matter where I go. I just wanna start my time so I can go home.

Wherever I go, I'm gonna go in gang-banging to the fullest and hold it down. Even if I'm in the slamma, I'm gonna stay on my toes and push, pull, strive through it.

-Indio

From The Beat: You know, Indio, we'd be more impressed if you wrote "To me it really doesn't matter where I go" after you get back from wherever that is. To us, the fact that you don't care is just another sign that you are still stuck in childhood, waiting for that next step in maturity that leads to adulthood. It truly makes a difference where you go and what you do, but the sad thing to us is that it looks like you aren't going to appreciate that difference until after you experience it. (Read the long response to Shrek's piece in this issue.)

I'm Gone!

Well, this is gonna be my last piece for The Beat while I'm in here, so I hope y'all like it.

And to The Beat, I'll be sure to write once in a while, and look out for my art work. I'm tryin' to make the cover. Stay positive. Peace.

-Big Heath

From The Beat: All right then man! Keep on drawing (and writing) and we'll see if we can get you on the cover. We're kind of picky about our covers, so you better come with something tight. Enjoy your freedom, but not too much.

Locked in

After a visit with my parents when I got locked in the admissions bathroom, I was like, "Slide the key under the damn door." They said, "I can't get it under."

I was pissed. They had to take the handle off. I was in there for 20 minutes.

The Hockey Man

From The Beat: There's something ironic about you being pissed while locked in the bathroom... To us, it sounds funny, but we bet it wasn't funny at the time, right?

The Blow Green Man

If I could change a law this world would get messed up, people would be chasin' me down the street after my Cannabis truck.

Man, I don't play around. What you need little homie is a quarter-pound. Damn, you don't play around. I'd be rollin' around East Palo Alto, and when they ask me where you from, I'll say, "Man, I'm from the land of gun smoke. San Francisco is my home, and if you didn't know, well, now you know."

-Big Heath

From The Beat: You started with "If I could change a law..." but we couldn't tell what you would do from reading your piece. If you were talking about legalizing weed, why don't you make it a little more clear? If you could elaborate on how you would go about changing laws, how would your piece go? Even though your piece made us smile, we wish you'd realize The Beat is rare opportunity to teach, to enlighten, to address serious questions in a serious way. One can make a serious argument in favor of legalizing marijuana, but this isn't it.

Legalize Marijuana

If I made one law it would be to legalize marijuana because I smoke a lot and I can still function and operate like a normal person or better. I think I function better when I am high.

-Gobe-Dimes & K-Nasty

From The Beat: Well, if getting locked up is an example of how much better you function when you're high, then we'd hate to see how you function when you're not... (By the way, we deleted your other piece because it was too immature, contained not a single bit of wisdom or teaching, and was just plain silly. The Beat is too valuable a resource for us to waste its pages on nonsense.)

Controversy In Tha Beat

You call yo'self the best rapper to ever write in the Beat
Rogue you soft and tender ninja like marinated meat
Yo' mom's cookin' is the only time you devoured some beef
You beta post in the house when my goons out on the streets
I got hitters that'll let ya have it for cheap

Like secondal they'll put ya to sleep

You compare yo'self to piss on a mattress and sheets

You done started controversy in the Beat

So now watch you back from Thinzell and Freddy P

Dog you know who you messin' wit'? Ninja, I'm a beast

You betta stay in yo' place like you a young teen

I make tricks like you bow down and kiss the pinky ring

You soft. You'll get whipped like cream

-Thinzell Washington

From The Beat: We're really disappointed in this from you, Thinzell, because we've come to expect so much more (and you are capable of delivering so much more). We went back to the Beat rapper you were responding to with your flow to see what it was all about, and we realize you missed the most significant part of it — our response. So, with (or without) your permission, we will quote it here: "If you want to be the best in The Beat, educate your reader with something he needs/Rock a reader's reality; don't sound off like a Hollyrock wannabe/You've got sills but mentally fail to feel the genius of The Beat/You dis on the backs of your own community/What Beat readers need is directions to unity/And a way up from these street-scamulous scenes of lunacy that give the system impunity/While your rhymes are fine and your rhythms sweet/It takes more than that to be the best in The Beat."

The Game I Play

The game that I play is not so good because you don't know if you are going to wake up the next day because the rivals trying to kill you. When you walk out of the house they are looking for you.

The game I play is not so good because I got a lot of enemies on my side. I used to live in Fresno and there is a lot of enemies that I have over there because they killed my boy and I put in some work that day.

Like my homie said, "You take one of ours and we take one of yours." That is how it is when you in the game. Much respect to all the homie out there.

-Shreck One

From The Beat: We have responded (at length) to this same idea in your other piece. Unless you stop your game, it will go on to your children's generation, and your grandchildren's, and their grandchildren's too. In the end, what will you have left? Martin Luther King, Jr. (and Jesus) rejected "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." What do you know that they didn't?

An Eye for an Eye

I would want to have a law like the death penalty. But I think that one of the family gets to shoot that person in back of the head and not get a charge for it. Just like they say, "An eye for an eye."

-Aaron

From The Beat: Who is this "they" that says "An eye for an eye." Why should "they" determine what you think. And just for the record, Jesus said: "You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.' "But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also . . . " (Matthew 5:38-39) We're not saying that you have to follow the teachings of Jesus, but we are saying you should at least realize that what "they" say is different from what He said...

No Free Ride Or Second Chances

As I sit in my cell

Thinking about my gangster ways

And all the homeboys that passed away

I don't regret anything I've done

In the past

But if I did

It would be too late 'cause I'm

In it for life.

Its not for the fame its just

For the game

There's no free ride or second

Chances when you live a life in a gang.

-Creepy

From The Beat: And you are damn right — there is no free ride or second chance when you live thug life. If your mind's made up, then it's made up, but professing your inability to change ("I'm in it for life") seems to us more of a front than a truth. You're in it for life only because you say it's so; you can get out, it's never too late. We're not naive, we're just speaking the truth.

Hatas

Too many people on my back

Can't get away from this stack

Would they just leave me alone

Maybe I should get a clone

Hate on my twork

But now you want to use my work

Get off my back

I need to stay on track

That's all I need to say

Everyone from the Bay

Please don't play the hate!

-Lil' LayLay

From The Beat: We feel the same way, but the fact is haters are here to stay, and they're going to be everywhere you go. Do you play into their hating at all? Do you ever hate on another? How can you dust the hating off, simply ignoring the hate around you, so that it doesn't bring you down?

Who Want What

I'm shady like Donald Trump
I dump on people egos
Plus I'm in tha game heavy
Thanks to mi amigos
I stack chips like poka
And pay for lawyers
I remain the same while y'all change
Like the Houston Oilers
When it get hot in my cell
I come out the shirt
I'm cut up wit' dreds in my head
While y'all skinny and hurt
If the Beat had a best rappa
Then that's what it had
Call me sav if you want
Write back fa tha funk
Let it get nasty
In front of the market I post
Like I paved the cement
And own every brick
You dudes is shaped like chicks
So feminine you are
I rent rides and ride out
While y'all stuck in your Hall
Getting fitted for guys' blouse
Come on out now
And this is my only entry fa tha Beat
Even if I don't get put there
This tha piece of the week
Write back on that real
Bullshh you can keep
Damn peace! It's war

-Freddy

From The Beat: Well, if it's war, it looks like you're losing, 'cause you're definitely a prisoner of something. It may be meaningful to you that you're a prisoner of war, but to us, we just see the prisoner. It's obvious you have skills with words, Freddy, which tells us that your brain is your most important organ. We hope you put it to better use (in your own behalf) than just to spit challenging words to other prisoners of war. That old expression, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste," seems appropriate. Every piece we select as "Piece of the week" teaches and explains and reveals things that make us see things in a different light. What does this piece teach? (Take a look at The Beat response to that rapper's piece; we reprinted under Thinzell's piece. It's worth reading.)

I Miss You

I'm a miss your eyes
Your head of dreads
Your dark complexion
And the words you said
Do good and keep your head up.

-Baby D

From The Beat: What will it take for you to set an example for this person to follow about how to do good and make it on the outs?

I'm Hella Mad

I'm so mad right now. Last night I found out my home pass was denied until I turn in an essay, and I'm hella set-trippin' off when I'm gon' get it! For real, I had hella plans to kick it with my homies. We were going to do some big things, feel me? And I feel hella sad in my room. I so deserve it and it's hella shady how they denied me.

In some ways I wanna run, but I'm not, feel me. I'm a jus' do my time and get it over with, 'cause I'm so used to this shhh it really don't fade me! So, to that girl in my unit, don't trip 'cause we both in the same situation, alright girl. Stay up!

-Lamei

From The Beat: We understand your anger, but from what we understand, there may be a good reason for asking you to write an essay in order to get your home pass (maybe having to do with some of the "big things" you hint at). In a way, it's sad to hear that you're so used to the time you're doing — how can you prepare yourself to be used to the challenges and the joys of the outs so that after your release, you don't return to the Hall.

I Love It I Love It I Love It

I love it when I pray
I love it when I go clubbin'
I love it when I kick it with my friends
I love it when I have sex
I love it when I smoke a stogie after sex
I love it when I drink away my stress
I love it when I'm in my cypher
I love it when I'm under the sun
I love it when I'm under the moon
I love it when I take a shower
I love adrenaline
I love myself
I love life
I love it I love it I love it

-Rich

From The Beat: The precious gift of life is to be cherished, not wasted. If one doesn't even love their life or themselves, it can be hard. You, on the other hand, know how to enjoy life and you still have still a lot of time to cherish and enjoy it. How are you going to live it up on the outs without risking a return to the Hall?

That's Just Taeda-Tae, Feel Me?

I leave on Monday, so it's a wrap.
Might hit the block and get me a sack,
but I don't know 'cause Taeda-Tae gotta be cool.
I can't wait 'till Thizzle get out so we can do what we do. That's just hit females and get money all the time.

Like R-Kelly, Tae wanna bump the grind,
gotta get mine,
so don't knock a ninja's hustle.
Watch Taeda: he goin' get out and bubble,
if you know what I mean?
Posted all the time wit' a pocket full of green
and I serve like Baskin' Robbins three different ice
creams, ya-dada mean?

I guess not 'cause you didn't respond
'cause my folks Thinzell goin' feel 'cause it's bond,
so Thinzell, I'll see you when you touch down.
It's nothin' my ninja. Just wait and see.
Remember we'll R-I-D-E until we D-I-E.
That's just Taeda-Tae, feel me!

-Taeda-Tae

From The Beat: We enjoyed meeting you and we know you have a whole lot of potential. So keep your energy on things that are legal because staying out is essential. Jail is no place for anybody to be. (We worry if you "goin' get out and bubble," that you might find yourself again in trouble.) Remember that when you're having a good time while being free. For freedom is harder than you think it is. We're expected to grow up and act like men when in reality we're still just kids. You'll be missed Taeda-Tae. You should stop by and see us some day.

We Used To Be

We used to be strangers
Now we're friends
There for each other
To the ends.
Well when I get out
I'm moving to Sac
But through time
I'll be back.
When you get out
I'll hit you up
We'll kick it together
And stir shhh up.
But for now, I'll see you on the outs.

-Baby D

From The Beat: What will you stir up? Are you friends enough to lead each other in a positive direction, or will hanging out lead back to the Hall?

-Lamei

I Love It When...

I love it when you deal with my actions
With so much patience
How you look at me with yo' sarcastic faces
And how you do anything for me even if it's so outrageous
I love it when you cop ya' guy fits
Kept a guy suited and booted
And when the haters were talkin' in ya' ear
You say you know I didn't do it
I love it when we cruise around
In the town tryin' to stunt
And I love it when you say you the wifey
Thinkin' you're not the only one
I'm going to love it when I see you
And you're excited that I'm home
I have to admit I wasn't the best boyfriend,
But I'm not going to tell on myself in this poem
Well, I guess this is the end
It's time for me to go
When I get out, will I be good to my girl?
I guess I'll never know.

-Fresh Reg

From The Beat: Nicely written, but maybe you should have a deep conversation with yourself so you'll know if you'll be good to your girl. If you don't you'll be setting your girl and yourself up. Do you think it's beneficial to add the problems of relationships to your already stressful transition back into society? Wouldn't it be wiser to get yourself right before you start worrying about how you feel towards somebody else?

My Homegirl

My truest homegirl would have to be this one female from Daly City. She hella coo' and I really miss her. We be always kickin' it, so it's weird when were not together . . . not like that though, feel me! Anyways, to all you people that are from our 'hood, you know what's up when you see me and her in the town. We be puttin' in much work, and this is real talk.

Well, I just feel like writtin' 'bout my home girl 'cause I got much respect for her and love. Until next time, do good and get out. Alright den', late.

-Lamei

From The Beat: Do you have enough respect for her to tell her about how much the Hall sucks, about what it's like to live without your freedom, about what it's like to stress so hard about a few hour long home pass — all so that she can learn from your experience, so that she doesn't have to follow your footsteps?

Me And You

I am alone
But dream of being with you
Even though we have much to learn
And our love is new
I still have faith in me and you.
I am devious
But I am innocent in the presence of you
We have not known each other for long
But I feel our love could be true
I still have faith in me and you.
I write these words
And express emotions I feel
I feel in your presence such serenity
Maybe this love is real.
All these feelings are so new
But still have faith in me and you.
Every time you speak my name
I want to go crazy
But I remain sane
So I know this is true
I have faith in me and you.
No matter what people say
We'll take it day by day
As long as you always stay true
I have faith in me and you.

-Friskie

From The Beat: We often cut love pieces from The Beat — we'd rather see you get this piece to the one you love directly. However, there's a depth and an eloquence to your words that we thought others in The Beat could learn from. How will you determine whether this love is true? What does it take to build a positive and loving relationship? What is it that you still have, and wish, to learn?

Cops Should Not Touch Us

I think that it should be a law about how the cops put they hands on us because it is not right how they be putting they knees in our back and in our neck. That ain't right.

They be puttin' dope on people and they be talking about we be resisting and they be like, "If you move I will shoot you," and then start hitting you and all of that.

They be puttin' they hand around our neck and we cannot breathe. One time that cop did it to me. It was like I was about to die and veins were popping out of my head, and it just felt like I was dying, and that ain't cool.

So they should make a law about how the police put they hand on us.

-Young T

From The Beat: We think it's a good law, especially if it was successful, because it is scandalous how some cops treat youngsters. But do you think having a law like that would work? Would the cops stop putting their hands on you even if the rule was they couldn't do it? Even now, there are laws about assault that also apply to cops, but that doesn't stop the practice. How can we make cops respect you and your peers to the point that they no longer feel the need to do these things?

So Many Victims

I have had a lot of victims in my addiction — best friends, family, and even people I didn't even know. If I had a chance to meet my victims' family, I am really not sure if I wanted to.

I always felt a lot of remorse for stealing from my own mom. My actions that I have done has made my mom sit in here sad at night and cry, wondering why her son is the way he is. She asking is it her fault. "Was I not a good enough mom? What did I do wrong?"

Well, I went to say it's not your fault. I am who I am. You were a good mom, I was the one who refused your authority.

-Shaden

From The Beat: What is the best way you can make it up to your mom? Have you already changed your ways with her, and do you plan to change some more?

Eliminate Life Sentences

If I could make a law I would make a law that if a person sentenced to life they should just sentence them to death. Instead of making them suffer for the rest of their life they should kill them. Or if someone was sentenced to a long time, they should give them a choice to either do their time or just die.

-Shaden

From The Beat: This is an interesting idea, Shaden, because you're saying that sometimes it's better to kill someone than let them live the rest of their life in a cage. Our own experience tells us that most people say they would choose death over life in prison — until they are faced with the actual fact. Then, most of them choose life. Why do you think that is?

**I always
felt a lot
of remorse
for stealing
from my
own mom.**

What Would I Say

What would I say if I could go back
How would you feel if I just got jacked
I'm changing my life one day at a time.
I'm speaking my thoughts that's straight
from my mind

All of this guilt that builds up inside
I want to say no but there stands my pride
If I don't go I won't be accepted
I went and I stole and then got arrested
I sit in tha hall alone and I pray
If I could go back what would I say

-Vincent

From The Beat: This is a terrific poem, Vincent. Changing your life one day at a time is the only way to do it, like beginning a long hike one step at a time. We all have guilt for things we have done. The commitment to change carries with it the responsibility to avoid doing things in the future that we have to feel guilty about. Use your past to guide your future — one day at a time.

Legalize Drugs And Kids

A new law would have to be lower consequences for drug charges. And legalize drugs and lower the age of legal tattoos. Lower the age to get a license.

-Kevin

From The Beat: We'd like to come at you in another, say ten years or so, and see if you still have the same idea about these things.

Two Lives Wasted

The law I would change
Is sending someone through the hurt and pain
For killing another man

If a person takes a life
Why you gonna give him life
That's like making a mistake twice
'Cause the victim family suffer
The suspect family suffer
But the person could be young
Grow up and realize what he done
But it's too late 'cause he's stuck in the slum.

-Merced

From The Beat: We think you're right about the system not making things better, but worse. But we want to know what you think helps a young person to realize what he's done when he grows up? And if he realizes what it means to take another's life, what should or could he do to try to make it up?

Doin' Time

Black out
Runnin' from the cops
Runnin' so hard I lost my shoes
And I had no socks

Hands cuffed again
Purple rings around my wrists
Headed to the station
Thinking with my fists

Fighting and fighting
Not knowing I couldn't come back
The police put me in D-Unit
Slammed the door behind my back

Why was I robbin'
Why is thievery my favorite crime
When I should have known
My victim would drop the dime

Now I'm gone
Serving time in the city
Got nobody to trust
But my family and me....

-Dark Angel

From The Beat: Have you really thought about the answers to your questions? Why were you robbing? Why didn't you think that the consequences could be jail? Can you really trust yourself if you put yourself in the position of getting locked up?

Gotta Get Paid

Every morning I wake up waiting to get paid.

Not thinking of the consequences knowing my life is at stake.

Woke up to the streets full of rage, cracked open a bottle of Alizea, I told myself, "Damn, I can't wait to be resting in my grave."

People these days want to perpetrate to get themselves out of a mistake which was purposely committed, all because they wanted to get paid.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: In many ways, we all want to get paid. But there are ways to get paid that may take longer, but don't lead to losing your freedom.

Lock Down

When I went to the halls
I was lookin' at four walls
I had problems that I didn't know how to solve
I was an aggressive person
Strike one, strike two, strike three
Is it worth it
In the halls anything could happen
YGC is nowhere near crackin'

-Young Jay

From The Beat: Is there anything that could have helped you in the hall to deal with those problems you didn't know how to solve? Have you learned some things since then that have helped you?



Change Three Strikes

I would change the three strikes law because I feel a lot of people are suffering because of that law. People with power is manipulating the law to get rich while every one else is obeying the law and following the law structure.

-Young Jay

From The Beat: We don't understand exactly what you mean about people manipulating the three strikes law to get rich. How do people get rich off that law? (We think that law is a terrible one, but we still don't understand exactly what you mean.)

Equal Justice Under Law

If I would make a law, it would be for all the people with power — i.e., governors, presidents, police, celebrities — to be prosecuted equally. If they commit murder, call it for what it is not self defense.

-Space

From The Beat: Right on, Space. The only problem we see is that the Constitution of the United States already says that everyone is to be treated equally under the law. Section 1 of the 14th Amendment guarantees to all of us "the equal protection of the laws." The problem isn't that we need a new law; the problem is we need to enforce the Constitution.

Loving My Freedom

I love it when I wake up early and have an early morning session. I love it when I don't get yelled at. I love it when I see my old friends. I love it when I see my mom. I love it when I listen to SlipKnot. I love it when I play guitar.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Don't ever forget how much you love these things — so that you never have to lose them.

Make Weed Legal

If I could make a law I would make weed legal because weed to me ain't nothing bad. It's some herbs to get you to a higher place in life.

I would make it so that the three strikes law will get thrown out the window, and there wouldn't be no three strikes law. The three strike's law is bullshh because that law is just to get you out of your society and take you from your family and throw you in a little ass cell for some bullshh.

RIP Reem, Fred, Lee, Cheez, Chuck, Ken-Tay I love y'all.

-Young Duke-el

From The Beat: We wish you had spent a little time talking about what you mean by "some bullss" with regards to the three strikes law. What kind of crimes are not bs to you? What should the society do to people who keep breaking the law? Is there a better way to deal with that problem? Also, we're curious to know how weed has led you to a higher place in life.

Hungry For Cash

Life is hostile for us youngstas.

Since elementary I been living wild
Getting in trouble in school for beating another kid in class
to hear all my patnas laugh.

The girls still tease me 'cause I would be mad.

Feeling my heart beat hard and fast

I could never stand not to have no cash.

That's when I got hungry to reach in a boy's pockets
then dash with all his cash.

So now I got money this is what I will do
I'll go to my cousin's house and smoke a blunt or two.

-No Name

From The Beat: If all you want is cash and a blunt to smoke, you don't value the biggest treasure you — your brain. Don't blow it.

Joyful, Clean And Healthy

I love it when I review in my mind what it's gonna be like when I get out. Everything is gonna be all right. My life is gonna be joyful, clean, healthy — something I never had before.

When I think about it I get hella excited, and this rush is a feeling of joy, and I love it! It all right.

-Mark

From The Beat: Wow, Mark, when we read about your feeling of joy, it makes us hella excited, too. We're behind you all the way. Good luck.

Gangs

Gangs are not all right

Some gangs fight innocent people

Gangs are not all right

Some gangs shoot innocent by-standers

Gangs are not all right

-Johnnie

From The Beat: We agree with you, but we have to ask if gangs do anything that's good? Besides the dirt they do, is there some positive function they fulfill?

Leaving For Good

I love it when I go home, when I leave for good. I am about to get my own place in about three months, plus I am starting college in six months which is in Jan. And then two months after that I will be getting married aka a wedding. So as of right now I am really lovin' it, because I got my life back on track.

-Charlie

From The Beat: Bravo, Charlie. It looks like you won't have to be writing from some program or jail because all that's behind you. Stay focused and keep your eyes on the prize. Congratulations on your upcoming marriage. And even more congratulations on your upcoming college!

Mom Was My Victim

The main victim was my mom. During my addiction I always stole money from my sister and my mom to pay for my drugs. I already apologized and I still feel bad till this day.

The law I would pass is that people can't reach a certain amount of income because the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

-Paul

From The Beat: We love everything about this piece, Paul — both your remorse and pain for victimizing your mom and sister, and recognizing how the inequalities in income create most of the problems we suffer in this country. We know it'll never happen (because the rich won't let it happen), but we love the idea. It's a beautiful dream.

the rich get richer and the poor get poorer

A Law Hating Haters

If I would make a law, it would be on people that hate because people be drinking straight haterade, and I ain't feeling that shhh. People are just straight J-cats. That what we call them out here in the Bay. It should be a law about hating on cats. I don't like that stuff. Pull it up.

-Money Earnin' Mount Vernon

From The Beat: Is it the actions of the haters you want to make a law against, or just the fact that people hate? How can a law change what people think about other people?

Get Them Out

If I could change the three strikes law I would try to get all these people that are in for 25 to life to get out and try to change their lives' that they messed up. I already have one AWOL. I don't want another one.

-No Name

From The Beat: If you don't want another AWOL, then don't go AWOL!

Santa Cruz

Decision

When I was a young teen, I had to make a decision about whether I wanted to get rushed into the barrio, or not. I decided I would, and from that day on, I repped it to the fullest. I even tattooed it on myself, and now the police label me as a gang member.

I've been in and out of Juvy ever since. Now as I sit in my cell, I regret a whole lot that I've done in the past.

-Tonio

From The Beat: What will you do when you get another chance? Are you confident that you've learned your lessons? What are your plans? Tell us about them, please.

What I Do

Walk into my cell, put my window cover up so no one can hear me. I get on my knees.

I shove my hurt down my throat. It burns inside. Tears run down my face. I do this in my room, all alone. There's an empty feeling inside me. I know I'm stuck in this cell for now.

-Esequiel

From The Beat: This is a terrific piece. This is what is called a prose poem. Very fine writing.

How I Am Seen

My homeboys do not treat me differently. They have love for the homeboy on lockdown. I think my family is happy that I'm not in CYA. So it's all good. Life is as good as you make it. Peace out from this man on lockdown.

-David

From The Beat: Maybe the most important question is: how do you see yourself? Do you love yourself enough to do the hard work that change requires?

REGRETS

I sit in my cell thinking of what happened. Why did I do my first crime? And why did I do more? Maybe it was because I wasn't thinking, or maybe because I thought it was cool. But now that I'm spending time in here for something I didn't do, I don't think it's cool.

Now, and next time, I will think about it. Now I'm doing my program, sitting in my room, reading books, and looking out my window. The first time I was here, I was able to make a map of the Hall. Well, at least of everywhere I went.

-Josh

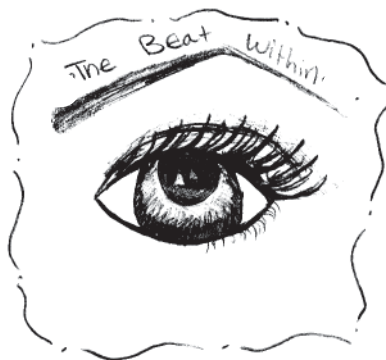
From The Beat: That must have been fun. Have you ever made a map of a non-existent country and given it a capitol and a government and people? How about making a map of your own future, a map that shows everyone, but mostly yourself, where you'd like to be, and what kind of person you'd like to become.

Poem

I ran outside to feel the rain
and I stayed outside a while.
When the rain was done
along came the sun
and this was cupid's smile.

-D

From The Beat: If the sun was Cupid's smile, what was Cupid's elbow? And what was his left foot? We're just kidding. We like your poem.



No More Good Times

I've been stripped of the good times that have got me through this in the past. Now I'm no longer having a blast, but now I'm sitting and reminiscing about the past. I have no more freedom to do what I want, but God is now watching over me.

So now I'm up in the pinta at almost seventeen years old. Going to war with drug lords just to pay the rent. Never been a skeezer or a dummy selling my body to any old fool. The only one who has seen me was my old man, now I have been stripped of my mind. God will be with me mentally and I'll be abrupt and free.

-Abrupt And Free

From The Beat: Do you regret doing anything? Can you go back to what you did that causes this regret? Imagine being able to do it over . . . what would you do? What do you think the outcome would have been?

What's up Beat Within?

I've written to you along time ago, like in 2002. Well, it's a long story tot tell, but I'll just tell you what I have lost or been stripped of, my self-respect.

What I did to myself, I didn't know what I was getting myself into two years ago. This is how I lost my self-respect; I was fourteen years old. And my life wasn't going very good and I was took away from my family.

-Gabrielle

From The Beat: Man, being taken away from your loved ones, especially your family, is hard to go through. A lot of people can't handle the pressure of it. Why wasn't your life going very well at that time? What do you think it will take to help it go better now?

Freedom

I want to be out, have my freedom. I will have it some time soon, but I want it now. I want to be at home with my mom and brothers, but my PO says no because she says I'm not ready.

So until I get my stuff straight, I'll be out until then. I tell her to please let me out and I'll try my best, but she says she won't until I change my ways and do my best. I know I'm ready, but she don't believe me. She says I'm a liar, because when I was out she gave me many chances. So now I'm stuck until she thinks I'm ready.

-Marina

From The Beat: If you think you're ready, then that's all that really matters. They have the power to keep you in there, but you ultimately have the power of succeeding when they do let you go. Do you think you're fully prepared to succeed? What do you need to be fully prepared?

In my cell there's writing on my walls that I recognized and knew my homie was in this very same cell.

Started Using Drugs

I remember when I first started using drugs to hide my emotions and to make me feel more like a person. I was eleven years old when I started smoking weed.

I was thirteen years old when I started drinking, and I started snorting cocaine about two-and-a-half months ago. I now realize this is not the way to live life. In and out of jail, rehab, and treatment. I would rather be at home and in school and have a part-time job.

I feel like I'm stripped of all my happiness when I'm out there using drugs. Getting some kind of cheap high to keep me stable for the next two-and-a half to three hours.

-Jesse

From The Beat: Drugs can ruin you, but you can ruin drugs! Don't let drugs be the reason your life isn't going right. At the same time, like you said, you started doing drugs to "hide your emotions and to make me feel more like a person." Why were you feeling like this and do you still? Just quitting drugs without addressing the issues that led you down that path means may make it difficult to stay away from them. You have the time to really look at your life now, so do your best to understand yourself and your life so you won't need to hide again in drugs. We wish you strength.

The Ghost Of Cellies Past

Sometimes I wonder at night before I go to sleep whom was here before me. What they were like, how they lived their life and what they did to get in the place that they were in.

In my cell there's writing on my walls that I recognized and knew my homie was in this very same cell. I also think how many people came in and out of here. And I also think about when I'm going to go home. When I get out before I go to sleep, I'm going to think if there's someone in my old cell, and if they're thinking of me, and all the kids that were before me.

-Myron

From The Beat: Well done. Yes, just as you were thinking about other people who have been in that cell, others will be thinking about you when you are gone. How can we stop the cycle of kids coming in and out of this place? The key here is to evaluate what brought you to the cell. Myron, you have a world of talent in several areas, so keep reaching for the moon, and even if you never touch the moon you will still be amongst the stars.

My Wish

I wish I was still 2 or 3 years old because all I would have to do is have fun.

Just play and eat, I won't have to cook my food.

My dad would do everything that is necessary for me.

I won't have to worry about any school grades or follow any laws.

I would just play with no worries

because I know everything will be okay.

-Courage

From The Beat: Courage, we believe all of us have the same wish at one time or another. When things are not going right for us we wish we were younger, so we wouldn't have to deal with our problems. But it is usually better to deal with our problems head-on. Don't be afraid to look to the future. It's up to you decide what your future will look like.

What It Is

Melodical prodigal

Flows hypnotical

Blows the brain to pieces

Telekinesis

When I reach this pinnacle

Critical

Criminal microphone that I rock

Faded in barbershops

Trying to talk

But see they can't understand

There's only one plan

The year two zero zero four

Locked behind Maricopa doors

Trying to gain some more

I know you wanna be on top of the world

Giving up diamonds and pearls to your girl

Watching your Jacuzzi swirl

It seems like material lust

You need to look up to the heaven imperial trust

See it's kinda hard to rhyme

Sometimes

Everybody wants to scrutinize

Redefine who you are

'Cause every person is a star

So let your light shine far

-Matt

From The Beat: Your lyrical/flows are empirical/Challenging the systems that be/With all that you see/We hope you will continue to write/Don't give up the fight/Will you stand for what is right?/And not just popular/Investing sir/In your future/Life is your treasure/Be open minded/Don't want to be blinded/By the lust for money and power/Instead seize the hour/Shining like a jewel/From the inside out, nobody's fool.



Stripped

Being locked up has made me feel stripped from my freedom of what I can do or say. Walking down the hall, and having to look straight ahead, but being locked up never stripped me of my pride.

-Shannon

From The Beat: Have you ever thought that pride may be what's gotten you locked up? Too much pride can lead to bad things. What does "pride" mean to you?

Love

Love is the color red

Red as a rose

Do you remember the first time?

We made love

You were my dove

High above the heavens

Love is pain but

Pain becomes love

Love is not a game

And I am not insane

Because I love you

It is just the way

I feel about you

And baby, I love you

And nothing will take you

Away from me because

Me and you are meant to be

-Brandon

From The Beat: You offer reassurance to your girlfriend in this poignant piece. A woman is free to love even more when told and shown by caring acts often that she is loved and cherished. Feeling the euphoria of love is a fantastic feeling, but there is so much more that goes into building a loving relationship. We challenge you to release the pain you are holding onto by sharing with others who care and possibly by writing your flows. Whenever you take advantage of opportunities to grow into a stronger, healthier person, you, in essence, open yourself to love. Loving others begins with loving oneself.

I Would Change The CYA Law

I would change the CYA law. Only people who commit sexual, very violent crime, like murder, or who break serious laws to some extent, would go to CYA, but not to the pen, 'cause CYA is worse than prison. I was told that by a few inmates in San Quentin, when I went in there for a program (SQUIRE) at school.

They say when they were in there, they had it hella bad. The people in CYA just have to prove to everyone they aren't weak, so they hurt others. I have a documentary on CYA that shows a lot of the problems there. It showed me how to get out of locked handcuffs with a part of a TV switch. It also showed the video on the staff beating the two inmates, and kids beating the staff, all the gang members, shanks, what they do all day.

-California
From The Beat: Maybe we'll try to get some of the youth, once they're transferred from Juvy to CYA, write back to The Beat Within about the conditions they're encountering in CYA, so y'all can read about what goes down there. Then y'all can make up your minds whether y'all think it's worth taking the risk to go or not. Would you recommend the SQUIRE program to all youngsters?

In The Streets

In the streets
Where people carry heat
But act like they are on top of the world
People walking with their heads down
Looking at their feet

-Young Drake
From The Beat: Why do people in the streets carry heat and walk with their heads down? Are they depressed? Sad? Scared? Scared of what? How do you walk down the street? Have you ever carried a weapon? If so, how did that make you feel, as opposed how you feel walking down the street without having a weapon?

If I Could

If I could live for as long as I could
I would die every day, if I could
Get the fastest car in the world, if I could
Be the richest man
I would help all the poor people
Plus, I would put the city where I'm from on the map
-Young Drake
From The Beat: Why can't you put the city where you're from on the map now? Why would you have to be rich? What would you like your city to be famous for — something violent or something positive? Are you proud of your city now? Why or why not?

If I Could

If I could, I would make it where I wouldn't die and I wouldn't go over twenty-one and stay looking good and crispy like always.

-Smurf
From The Beat: Would you make up a law so no one would ever die or grow older than twenty-one and stay good looking, or just yourself? Would you get bored of being the same age for the rest of your life?

What I Love

I love it when I get high and chill with my friends
I love it when I get drunk and go do something
I love it when I get released from Juvenile Hall
I love it when my girl kisses me
I love it when I wake up and it is sunny outside
I love it when I go to hop-hop shows
and you can feel the bass through your whole body
I love it when my mom leaves town and I have huge parties
I love it when me and my homies chill and smoke weed
I love it when I wake up after a night of partying and think how fun it was
I love it when my friend takes his mom's car and comes to pick me up
I love it when I am free
I love it when there is nothing to do, so I just stay home and sleep all day
I love it when I get a lot of money that I don't have to work for
I love it when people give me things for free

-Love It All
From The Beat: How do you get away with having parties when your mom's gone? Does she find out when she gets home? Then what happens? Do your homies do anything illegal in your mom's home while she's away? If so, and y'all get busted, do you realize your mom can lose her home? It's fun to kick back and chill, but how do you get money you don't have to work for? Why should someone else have to work so you can have money? Have you ever had a real job? Doing what? Can you get a job, so you can help your mom out with money? You can't always get things for free you know and nothing worth having is free. So get up and get your own things.

Blow Kisses On The Phone

I love it when I spend time with my baby
I love it when he calls me his Lil' Mami
And I know he loves it when I call him my Papi
And I love it when he licks honey off my body
I love it when you tell me you love me
I love it when we're alone
I love it when you blow kisses on tha phone
I love it, how your love gives me effects
And I know how you love it when I lick your neck
Also when I do things dat you don't expect
I love it, I love it, I love it all!
I love mah baby Juanix

-Lil' Mami
From The Beat: Young love is cute but we hope you're being safe about all of it. Why don't you mail your baby Juanix this sweet poem? Do you think he'll write one back for you?

I love it when there
is nothing to do,
so I just stay home
and sleep all day

I'm Lovin' It

I love it when you tell me you love me
I love it when you pull my hair
I love it when you call me mommy
I love it when you grab me
I love it when you look at me
I love it when you hold my hand
I love it when you are aggressive
I love it when you are you
I love it... I love it... I love it

-Guera
From The Beat: Who are you writing about? What is it about you that this guy loves? What do you love the most about yourself?



Poverty

I would make every rich person who is white pay all blacks in poverty with a check every month, like Bill Gates, 'cause he is the richest person in the world.

-Smurf
From The Beat: What about other poor races? Sound like your mind is oppressed and if you continue thinking like this — you'll constantly be held down. We do still live in a world filled with racism, but you need to do all you can to out there and get what you want.

My Girl

I love it when I am with my girl and we are having a good time, and we just chillin' like a girl from the ghetto who keeps tha mood mellow when we chill, sippin' drank and smoking that kill.

-Smurf
From The Beat: Can you have a good time without drank and kill? How are you managing in Juvy without them? Are they the reason you are incarcerated? What will happen when you get out? Will you start up with the drank and bomb, or will you be able to resist them?

stay looking
good and
crispy like
always

I Love It When

I love it when you come close
Me encanta cuando
Me besas por todo el cuerpo
(I love it when you kiss me all over my body)
I love it when
You hug me tight
Me encanta cuando vamos a nuestro lugar
(I love it when we go to our favorite place)
Favorito y hacemos lo que nos gusta
(And we do what we like to do)
And most of all, I like it when you love me.

-Ampelia, Marin

From The Beat: Huy esta peligroso lo que te gusta. Si esta chico es tu adoración, búscalo y quedate con lo que te gusta hacer con esta persona. Esperamos que sean cosas sanas las que haces con tu amado. ¿O nos equivocamos?

now I'm starting to realize that it doesn't matter because now that I am locked up

Me Encanta Ese Pelón

Me encanta cuando me miras cabrón
Sé que eres un vato loco
Pero me gustas así
La primera vez que te vi dije,
"ese pelón tiene que ser mío."
Y así fue, ese cabrón fue mío por ocho meses.

From The Beat: ¿Si tanto te encanta ese pelón, que te impide que lo tengas para siempre? Cuida con mucho cuidado lo que realmente quieres.

I Love That Bald-Headed Nut

I love it when you look at me, fool
I know that you are a crazy fool
But I like you like that
The first time I saw you, I told myself
"That bald-headed nut has to be mine"
And that's how it went on
That bald-headed nut was mine for eight months.

-Ampelia, Marin

if I had the chance to make up a new law, it would be to "release every Mexican that's locked up."

El Amor

Simon, el amor es bonito y más cuando ambos se quieren. No me gusta cuando las jainas son infieles. Tampoco me gusta que me digan que van cambiar y no cambian.

Pero no hay pedo, no me aguito, mientras la jaina que tengo ahorita no me haga más mamadas porque no me gustan.

From The Beat: Aquí en esta vida hay de todo tipo de persona, primero es mejor conocer a la persona antes de llevar acabo una relación para que así ninguno de los dos salgan lastimandose.

Love

Right, love is beautiful, and it's even sweeter when both people involved in the relationship love each other equally. I don't like it when females are unfaithful. Also, I don't like it when they tell me that they're going to change, but they never do.

It's all good, though, as long as the female that I'm with right now doesn't do anything shady to me, then it's all good because I don't like females that play games.

-Juan, Marin

Ahora Me Doy Cuenta

Yo soy un vato que no le importa nada cuando ando en las calles con mis homies. Siempre ando de locote fumando unleño. Yo sólo pienso en fumar droga.

Pero ahora me doy cuenta que no vale la pena porque ahora que estoy encerado en cuatros paredes. Me arrepiento de todo lo que andaba haciendo afuera, robando estereos de carros y carros.

From The Beat: Que bien que te hayas dado cuenta de que estar haciendo estas cosas malas no te llevará a nada bueno, y es más ni siquiera vale la pena. Esperamos que este arrepentimiento tuyo te ayude a no volver hacer las cosas que hacías antes.

Now I've Realized

I'm a thug that doesn't give a damn about anything when I'm out on the streets with my homies. I'm always, very high, smoking a joint. I only think about smoking drugs.

But now I'm starting to realize that it doesn't matter because now that I am locked up behind four walls, I regret everything that I was doing when I was on the outs, stealing stereos and car after car.

-Smokey And Grillo, Marin

Me Siento Una Víctima

No me gusta que la placa me siga. En esta vida me siento como una víctima del SIDA. Por eso tengo que ponerme trucha, listo para todo lo que venga.

Escucha, la violencia en este mundo es mucha. En este mundo que nos llaman delincuente, por eso sus vidas se pasan derrepente.

From The Beat: Esperamos que siempre te cuides muchísimo contra esto. Es algo que no sólo tú deberías de cuidarte sino todos.

I Feel Like A Victim

I don't like it when the police are on my back. In this life of mine, I feel like an AIDS victim. That's why I have to watch my back, ready for whatever comes my way.

Listen to me, violence in this world is plentiful. In this world, we're viewed as delinquents. That's why our lives fly by us.

-Flaco, Marin

Dejarnos Libres

Si pudiera hacer una ley, yo haría la ley que todos los que estamos torcido queremos, una que nos dejen salir. Yo me pongo a analizar mi caso, por la cual soy inocente de lo que me acusa, y ya voy a cumplir un año aquí y no me han dado ninguna oportunidad.

Hay personas que van y vienen como los gavachos que entran y salen. Me pregunto, "¿por qué no les dan el mismo tiempo que a nosotros? A nosotros, los Mexicanos nos chingan mucho. Es asería mi key, "dejar salir a los Mexicanos libre"

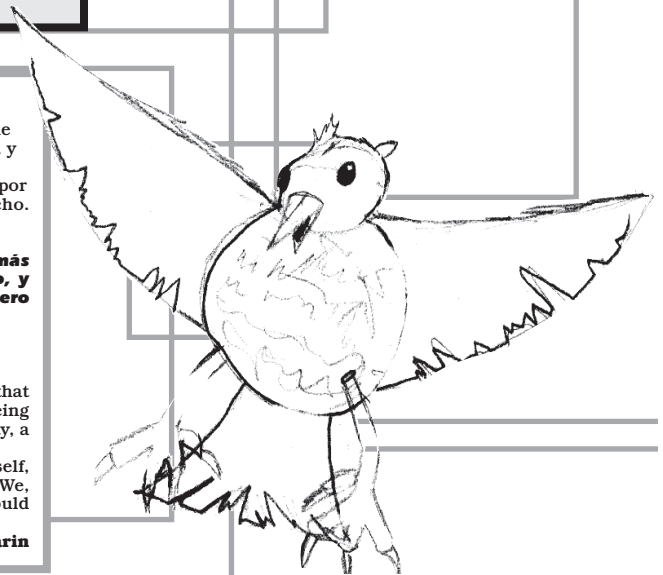
From The Beat: Nos imaginamos que hay alguna razón por la cual ustedes hacen más tiempo. A lo mejor, es que ustedes tienen que esperar por su cupo a ser deportado, y es por eso que hacen más tiempo. La verdad es que no es correcto lo que hacen, pero tenemos que seguir sus reglas, porque este no es el lugar donde nacimos.

To Let Us Free

If I could make up a law, I would make up a law that everyone that's locked up wants: a law that sets us free. I start to analyze my case, a case in which I am innocent of all the charges being pressed against me. I'm about to be in here for a year and I have yet to be given an opportunity, a second chance at life.

There are people that come in here and go. I'm talking about the white guys. I ask myself, "Why don't those people that come and go do the same amount of time that they make us do?" We, Mexicans, get the shorter end of the stick, so if I had the chance to make up a new law, it would be to "release every Mexican that's locked up."

-Juan, Marin



My Return

In 1993 I was taken into San Francisco's YGC (Youth Guidance Center), aka Juvenile Hall, for attempted murder. I was only sixteen.

It was my eleventh time in Juvi since the age of twelve. Since my first arrest, my cases had gradually become more serious. First arrest: false identification to a police officer (I said I was 18 when I was 12 and gave an alias), last arrest: attempted murder.

After nearly thirteen months in YGC, I was sentenced to eleven years in state prison. Before I left YGC, however, I had picked up two more cases and four more years on my sentence.

From YGC it was on to CYA. From CYA it was on to San Quentin, New Folsom and, finally, Pelican Bay SHU. After serving a ten-year stint I was released on parole back to San Francisco.

Many of you already know my story. It is ugly and beautiful at the same time. In my 16 months of freedom I have been doing all that I can to make up for those years of freedom lost and to work with the youth that are now caught up in the system and facing the same trenches I had to endure life in for sooooo long.

Today I was capable of doing just that in a way that I could never have imagined would be so empowering.

Today I reentered YGC a free man. Today I was given an opportunity to redeem myself in what I consider the most profound action I've undertaken since my release.

In order to realize why going back to the hall would be so meaningful to me, I think the reader of this has to understand just how much a kid of just 16, who is far from home, knows nobody in the place he is, and is facing life in prison, endures. That was the ugliest part of my entire ten-year experience in the system.

When I was in YGC, I was one of the most troublesome kids the staff there had ever known. From the wild days of flooding my cell to participating in an attempted escape that resulted in a nurse being taken hostage down to stabbing another ward over a perceived unforgivable slight. And there is the flip side, the suffering I endured, which I did not bring upon myself, the pain of being so far removed from my family and the people that loved me, the days and nights I sat in a stripped-down cell crying for all that I missed, all that was robbed from me by an uncaring system. I have long since come to terms with what I did in there and why I did it, but I have never been able to get over the tremendous amount of pain and suffering I also endured while there as a result of my, and other's, actions.

The day I departed YGC I left behind puddles of my blood, sweat and tears.

The type of work I do in the community now involves working with a lot of young folks that I see so much of the younger me in. Knowing that if these youngstas don't receive the right kind of advice on how to endure their plight in life they could end up enduring the ugly experience of a decade held captive beginning in the same place I began, YGC. That is what has sustained my determination to help them, to be an advocate for them. That is what comes with an overwhelming sense of responsibility born from consciousness.

But I'm still not perfect. I still bear the psychological scars of my experience. And not all of my experiences are scars; some of them are still open wounds anticipating the deliverance of the appropriate cures.

Walking back into that "max" unit of YGC, so popularly known as B5, was the cure a lot of my open wounds had been starving for.

For nearly two hours today I was given an opportunity

to share my experiences there with the young men that are currently enduring struggles similar to that which I endured a little over ten years ago myself.

Being able to walk back into that place a free man with a purpose was what I can only describe as an extremely intense experience. Before we even entered the hall, I was surprised by the arrival of a juvenile hall legend, Jack Jacqua, co-founder of the Omega Boys Club. I remember when I was in the hall and he would bring me books on the Black Panthers and Cesar Chavez. He was, and remains, as real as ever, letting kids and even some confused grown men know what it means to be a real man.

I could hardly believe that I was standing there in my own clothes, a pack of cigarettes in my pockets amongst other things, and sweaty palms, yet still free to walk back out again. Everything looked the same as I remembered it with few exceptions — the old mural that decorated the hallway corridors was painted over. I remember we would always laugh at the fact that someone had conned the staff and managed to write in large letters on the mural "Acapulco Gold." Of course we all knew that was common Frisco old school jargon for weed. A few new tables had been installed in the rec. room of the unit, the guys there now had regular physical ed. classes and programs like The Beat Within coming in to work with them.

The small improvements on conditions there encouraged me until I walked back out and seen the monstrous molestation of the earth happening where formerly stood a blacktop playground for youth in the halls. Upon the naked tierra they are building a new Juvenile Hall, which is acclaimed to be "modern." That is exactly what they said when they opened Pelican Bay State Prison and the SHU therein. That is of course now described as the most dehumanizing prison in the state. Why is it that they always think that the solution to problems they are largely themselves responsible for creating are considered resolvable by creating new institutions, which, while being exteriorly different, continue to serve as dysfunctional internal bureaucracies?

Back inside a tide of emotions flooded my senses. In the first few moments I was nervous, then I was awed by the realization of what I had been through since that first night I spent in B5. If it weren't for the sense of purpose I knew we had stepped into YGC with, and my will to fulfill that purpose, I think I might have broken down with survivor's guilt.

You see, some of the people I have admired and loved most in my life as comrades and friends were first encountered in this place. The seeds of our solidarity were planted and fostered here., my comrade, Oba Frelimo, for instance. We were there together as youngstas. We endured all that this ugly experience could throw at us and ended up graduating from those halls to the pinta, where we strove to make shhh right for ourselves and others for many years. My young comrade, Oba, is still in the trenches. At 16 years old he was given 15 to life. He deserves all the freedom I have and more. In a fleeting glimpse of what could easily occur, I saw myself screaming up to the sky, why me?! Why am I here like this and my comrade is there, in Pelican Bay, bound and tortured by a twisted system?

I feel deep admiration, respect, solidarity and love for those men I encountered in prison that have transformed their mentalities and begun to redeem themselves through a selfless path towards personal and collective liberation.

Our mission in the halls on this day was to speak

JASON COMPA TRÉAS (CONT.)

with the youth in B5 about a community resource guide for youth we here at The Beat Within have been given the chance to create via the juvenile probation department. Since this mission demands that the youth participating tell us about their experiences in these programs, we felt it was necessary for us to share a lil' about ourselves and our experiences in the place they are now in. More so than this, however, we recognized what a great opportunity this was to hit these young men with some of the more meaningful things we have learned because of our experience in the hall. Man, did I give it to them!

After introductions from Michael Kroll and David Inocencio, my colleagues and good friends here at The Beat, I stepped up to the plate and pitched my best advice to about twelve of the most mannish youngstas you could ever meet.

The entire time I spoke, these young men gave me their full attention. That was more than I could ever have given ANYONE that came to speak to me when I was in their shoes. In hindsight, I think (and would be so bold as to assume that my advice was absorbed and would be applied) that I gained their attention because I kept it real with them. They instinctively felt that. I talked to them about the oppressive realities of prison life, about the indignity of having to show your naked body to some correctional officer every time you were coming out of a unit. I talked to them about following the right examples in life, like of those of Malcolm X, Che Guevara, and those heroes of colored people who have made the biggest sacrifices a person can make to make the future we are destroying, better.

With a revolutionary enthusiasm I spoke of the most important lessons I learned in prison, about being a man with loyalty to your beliefs, honoring your people and expanding their awareness of why shhh is the way it is.

I told them how I handled my time there and how I wish that I had handled it better. I stressed the importance of exercising the muscle of their mind more than any other. I showed them a way to stay free that DID NOT entail being a coward, telling on anybody, or betraying their sense of community. That is the revolutionary path I was exposed to once I was in prison. My hope was to make them see this path as appealing as possible and get on it BEFORE they ever have to hit the same prison yards I did.

In the span of our workshop, we took these guys from mean mugs to firm handshakes, embraces and promises to work on what they need to in order to prepare themselves for whatever may lay ahead. And I gained a sense of redemption that was more immediate than any I've ever known.

In 1997 I began my association with The Beat Within from New Folsom State Prison, and we maintained it from Pelican Bay SHU for the last 6-plus years of my sentence I was there. During the course of those years, The Beat Within founder, David Inocencio, became someone very important in my life and it has been with his and the rest of The Beat cadres' help, that I have been able to accomplish all that I have in the 16 months I have been free. More so than any other chance at personal growth and redemption I have had over the last 16 months, this has been by far the most meaningful. I owe The Beat tremendously for opening that door for me, and if there is one individual who deserves more credit than I do, that would be David himself. Thank you, Dave.

I think that this will become one of those Beat stories that never ends. At least that is what I would like to believe and hope for.

When I walked out of those halls, I felt that I had mopped up and reclaimed as my own, some of the blood, sweat and tears that I spilled there.



I think that this will become one of those Beat stories that never ends.

YOUNG D Young D was once incarcerated in San Francisco's YGC. He's now an intern in our office and a good one at that. This week he drops a piece on us about how he got involved in the beef. He also makes it clear that it's not the life he wants to live. Young D's been dropping heat on us consistently the past month and he's getting better and better, so we just hope he can be an inspiration to all of our readers.

How I Live

See, how I live is dangerous. You can't do what you want to do and you can't go where you want to go. Now you tell me — is that how you would want to live? I don't think so. If you do decide to leave off yo' block, you got to have some kind of protection such as a knife or a gun.

See, my opinion on this situation is you really don't have no choice. For instance, if you're around a group of your friends and a group of people or a set don't like your patnas and a fight jump off — what you gon' do? Stand there and watch yo' patnas get they ass whip, hell nah, you gon' help, right? You in the beef that quick — and for what? I'm 'a tell you — you in it just because you help yo' patnas. That's how it is where I'm from.

See, living in Hunters Point you got two choices — either you get down or you lay down. I know y'all thinking like — what he mean by that? I'm 'a tell The Beat exactly what I mean. Put it like this, if you're walking down the street and you see a group of people and one of them ask you were you from, you say nowhere, so they like — you get down or lay down? — that means you get with them or you get yo' ass beat. See that's one example of what people in my neighborhood go through.

Remember when I said, you with yo' friends and some ninjas try to play them — what would you do? Well, I'm

'a tell y'all what I did and this is the reason I'm in this stupid-ass beef shhh in the first place. It was a Friday night when my homies wanted to go to Third Street. I'm not just sayin' 1 or 2 homies — more like 10-15, but at the time I wasn't thinking about my ninjas starting shhh — but I was wrong. So we on Third chillin' and we see some ninjas my homies don't like. So they started talking shhh and then they hoped off the bus — so all my ninjas ran in the middle of the street an' started fighting and then somehow the fight ended up by me and a ninja socked me. Oh, and don't think I'm just gon' let a ninja sock me and get away with it. No — it don't go like that. So next thing you know me and this ninja was in the middle of the street fighting, so from there on — ninjas got the wrong idea such as when they see me they would jump me or they would chase me.

So I got tired of that shhh and started really kickin' it with my homies 'cause I felt they were the only ones that had my back. So we started doin' grimy shhh like goin' to Third looking for trouble and all that bad shhh, but at the time I really wasn't tryna hear what nobody had to say. I felt like I couldn't be touched. I started holding the strap. It's like I had no sympathy for nobody. If you were from the block I didn't like — you automatically had an ass-whoopin' coming — no ifs, ands or buts about it. (To be continued . . .)



TROAS BARNETT

Troas Barnett, better known in these pages as Sankofa, drops another long essay our way. The following piece deconstructs "plantation psychosis," the lingering effects of slavery on the behavior and thought patterns of Blacks in America today. Sankofa ends his piece with a book recommendation for those who want to learn more about these and related issues. We thank Sankofa for his continued dedication to The Beat; Troas comes to us from CSATF in Corcoran.

Plantation Psychosis And Realignment

I wrote this piece to address and expose plantation psychosis. To my readers: no, this is not another one of those essays which raises the attention to the wrong but provides no solution or recommendation to correct the causes/symptoms. To write about a topic such as this and to not provide references to aid in solutions is to promote "victimization." Those that don't know what plantation psychosis is or means, I hope that you will read through this piece and purchase the recommended book selection. If you do so you will have an invaluable tool that will open your mind and awaken your consciousness. Certainly the victimizer is only as strong as the victim is weak, and the manipulator is only capable of manipulation so long as the victim wills himself to be manipulated.

By definition, plantation psychosis is a fundamental mental derangement, characterized by defective or loss of contact with reality. This is manifested by a particular conditioning imposed upon the psyche through a series of extreme physical and psychological apparatuses administrated through external stimuli such as fear or environmental factors. These factors were experienced on the slave plantations. The horror of physical mutilation and psychological attacks were systematically transferred from one generation to the next until it had become socially clocked and subliminally and psychologically transferred into patterns of behavior. This behavior manifest itself into a peculiar self-hatred or denial towards one's own self kith and kin. For one to even fathom the effects of plantation psychosis, or its relevance as a carryover into today, one must first free him/herself of this psychosis by becoming aware of its many causes and symptoms.

Introduced by a sinister African kidnapper who held many Africans in bondage in the West Indies, it was for the sole purpose of absolute control. This diabolical scheme prevails well into the present age today. These are painful vicious historical facts, but we must not be blinded to realignment solutions. We must find and inject cures and treatment to those who knowingly and unknowingly suffer from this particular illness. In some instances it lies dormant in the innermost recesses of our psyche. This is the root of the perpetuating self-destructive behavioral patterns that create an orbiting cycle that turns on its axis. Why does the effect of William Lynch's methods still continue today? The general method was to outline differences and to make them bigger. Fear, distrust and envy were all used for control purposes. At the top of the list was age utilizing the young against the old (and vice versa); and the female against the male (and vice versa); and the house servant against the field servant; and also the slave breaker against his own people. Regular horrific acts would take place and those on the plantation would all (children included) have to watch. Emphasis was made on color with captors giving attention to all hues; assigning differences because of darkness, lightness, or brownness of skin; fine hair, coarse hair etc. With differences in labor and assigned places around the plantation these and other factors combined to make distrust stronger than trust and envy stronger than respect or admiration. The effect of receiving this indoctrination became self-generating and self-refueling and has lasted for hundreds of years. There was a pacification of the will and sheer dependence became the norm. The captors were conscious of the injustice and wrongs they were every hour perpetuating;

they watched with skilled and practiced eyes and learned to read with great accuracy the state of mind and heart of the captive Africans.

Where nature provided Africans with a natural capacity to take care of life sustaining needs for each other and to exist in harmonious twin-ness. The plantation psychosis broke this cycle, creating mass confusion and the rupture of African minds. A diabolical system was concocted to secure the captors' future control. Special attention was paid to female and the young offspring. Psychological and physical instruction of containment was created for both. On the plantations the female and her offspring were broken from one life to another. The emphasis was to pay little attention to the original "breaking" process, but to concentrate on future generations. The female mother was psychologically broken, which in turn caused her to break her offspring in their early years of development. When the offspring was old enough to work, she delivered them to the exploiter for her normal female protective tendencies were lost in the original breaking process. This psychological manipulation was to train the female whereby she would trust the enslavers and eat out of their hand and train her children to do the same. When it came to the process of torment, visually seeing horrific barbaric acts (lynchings; tar and featherings; torn asunder-ings — notice the Levis jeans patch) by two horses she was helpless and terrified. Infants and the young attempted to hide behind their mothers dress tails, only to be forced to watch again. Afterwards females were tested incessantly to make sure their submission was total and complete, and in instances where total submission was not gained the bullwhip was used.

Relationships were reversed. In a female's natural state she and the African male would have a mutual dependence upon one another. That naturalness of harmonious relationships was all reversed by pulling one apart burning another and bull whipping yet another all in her and her children's presence. By her being left alone, unprotected, with the male image destroyed, the ordeal caused her to move to a psychologically terrified state. For fear of the children's lives she trained the male to be mentally weak and dependent but physically strong. These and other combined factors brought about serious psychological implications. By killing off the protective male image and by creating submissive dependant minds it started an orbiting cycle that's turning on its axis. We must rise above these historic past and present psychological attacks rooted deep in the recesses of our minds.

Orbiting cycle means a thing turning in a given path. Axis means upon which or around which a body turns. By no means do these atrocities and circumstances excuse Black America of our responsibility to pull ourselves up, dust ourselves off. We must first recognize that we have not only been psychologically, culturally, and spiritually conditioned to rebel against our own natures, but as a people we have been divided into a nation of individuals and have become no longer the collective unit of common interest we once were. This realization is an extremely relevant issue and in need of immediate attention and rectification. Then we will gain the momentum to generate the necessary force to move forward as a people. The conditions of our hearts towards one another must change; our minds must become abuzz with progressive activities. It is not my intention to ridicule an over whelming segment of my people here in America by exposing our exploitations and behavior to the world, as so many do. This would be

TROAS BARNETT (CONT.)

misleading and tantamount to fashionably blaming the victim, which would only expose and perpetuate the residues of my own plantation psychosis. We must do an observation of our social interactions in order to observe the correlations responsible for our psycho/sociological profile, for it is both these factors, environmental and psychological conditioning, that have pre-established and continues to establish our patterns of behavior, and it is through these patterns of behavior, do we again trace the origins of the psychosis back to the US plantations and the Caribbean "proving grounds." On the plantation, the only way for one to better their condition was at the expense of one's own kith and kin by being in some capacity or another an agent provocateur for the master, whether it be overseer, preacher, or servant. Fatherhood has been psychologically grafted and socially mutated out of the Black man's natural state and character.

Even today (as of old on the plantation) brothers love some "nookie" — they talk about it all the time! They will go through hell and high water to get them some. Yet a significant percentage of us still have no inclination or incentive to take on the full time responsibility of fatherhood. This behavior, again, is the result and residue of plantation psychosis and must be recognized as such and understood that this psychosis is being perpetuated through welfare and the penal economic system. If we are going to find cures and administer treatment with must diagnose the causes. This plantation psychosis also can account for the many rapists, pimps, adulterers, and an extremely large percentage of gender bending in our communities. Plantation psychosis can be associated with today's incentive toward work ethics as well as working on a plantation, from can see to can't see and not being able to reap the benefits caused many to have a unproductive work ethic. It's evident that this had effects and has carried over into today, due

to intense cruel conditions of the plantation. This is counter-productive to us in today's world.

The most effective element that has served Black America from being a body of people into a nation of individuals is false leadership. From a political standpoint, there is only one institution in America, and that is the institution of capitalism. The only organization that may exist within this system is that formed by those who have pledged an allegiance to operate with the framework of this capitalist institution. Therefore it is a natural reaction that we distrust many organizations who advocate acting in our best interest, telling us to "keep hope alive" or acting as social ventilation systems of rhetorical propaganda and mock revolt, which further retard any true leadership rising from among the masses. I'm saying all this to say race consciousness is persistent with race maintenance.

I'm recommending a book with high praise, and no, it's not about slavery or the plantation. This book restores order to our African conscious in a potent way. The central theme of the book is "Just males and females are equally empowered to govern every phase of society." The author probes what and how and brings back reclaims our sanity and moral worth. Concepts in the book are MAAT (balance); unity; complementarity; masculine feminine synthesis; harmonious twinness, etc.

Book title: Restoring The Mother Principle by Oba T Shaka; price, \$17.00. 590 pages. It can be purchased from any good African bookstore. If you don't go out and get this one you'll be missing a brick of knowledge. This piece is in the spirit of deconstruction, reconstruction, constructionist as taught to me by Naim Akbar. In closing, the type of information gathered is crucial to the success of any intelligence operation. This is Sankofa giving it to you so you can grow.



When those shots were fired Everything stopped

SPEEDY Speedy aka Nate L., is in ROP, a boot camp facility in San Andreas, California. Speedy is Chunky's homeboy, and Chunky told Speedy if he hit The Beat Without with somethin', we'd put it in our magazine. Speedy is a young teen years and has been getting locked up since he was twelve, and is trying to get out of ROP. According to Chunky, Speedy has a lot of heart and pride, and Chunky tries to watch out for him. Here is Speedy's first poem about his homeboy who got shot up when Speedy was younger. He hopes you'll like it.

Fallen Soldier

(Here's a story about the homeboy Justin aka Spider, RIP)

Tears fall from my eyes when I think of you

Two youngstas kickin' back, high as hell

The story's nothin' new

I remember how thangs used to be

When you were alive

And I remember how you' hefa was crying

When you died

Everything was coo' that night

Another ordinary day in the Central Valley

It was me, you and those hynas

Kickin' back in that alley

Then those vatos rolled up

They rolled down the window

And gang signs were thrown up

Words were said

And 'hoods were disrespected

Then the thang happened

That we both expected

When those shots were fired

Everything stopped

When I turned back

I saw your body drop

It all happened hella fast

I saw your body lifeless

On shrubs and dead grass

Then homie came

And picked your body up

That's the last I saw of you

Until your boy called me up

Tears fell from my eyes

When he told me "What's up?"

I look back on the years

When you were here

And am gone

Much love goes out to you

From me and the homies

And the same from your mom

When we had the courage

To tell her

Shouts go out to one fallen soldier

Much love, carnal

RIP to Justin aka Spider

1980-1999

WILLIAM M. THURSTON

William M. Thurston has been contributing to The Beat for more than a year now, but we're sad to report that he has decided to hang up his pencil and focus on getting himself together for his imminent release. And although our readers will lose out on his powerful writing, society will benefit from his becoming a free, productive citizen. We wish him all the best. William writes from Solano State Prison in Vacaville, CA.

Flight Of The Raven

(from the "Sticks and Stones" manuscript)

I've come to be like the dust;
like hurricanes that knocked down houses and
took the lives of so many people; destroying any
and all the things they've ever worked for.

I've come to be like the sore that never heals;
that open wound that oozes infections —
bleeding through the bandages so gently wrapped
around my broken wings.

I am the Shadow now —
the one who once flew through
the tombs in search of love
but never found her.

Instead, I discover granite stones with "my" name
engraved upon their white-rock surfaces and the
day I was born into their worlds, and the day I was
to depart from their sacred trust.

Instead, I discovered a stench from the gaping
grounds that were to swallow me and where I was to
lay my aching bones along and in the darkest place
and without my souls to guide me through.

Instead, I discovered an outer boundary to my inner
dreams,
and that all the while I was loving you,
I'd killed you with the bare hands of what I'd done.

So now I am the murderer once again,
And once again I marinate in innocent tears;
Those of which were caused by my unintentionals.

The Little Things

(from the "Sticks and Stones" manuscript)

Sometimes things don't work out the way we plan or the
way we hoped for them to. We tell ourselves, "Okay, this
time I'm going to do this . . ." or "the next time I'm going to
do that . . ."

But the truth is that we have very little control or say-so as
to how we'll live our lives to what the end result will be.

Every day we continue to go about existing as fish swimming
upstream. Going "against" the current instead of with the
flow of our natural instincts and abilities. Sometimes we
get so caught up in trying to stay in step with society that
we lose focus on the main objective: being and believing in
ourselves — our own values, experiences and beliefs. And
by doing so we come to either a halt, or we backslide or we
crash completely. Mentally, emotionally, and sometimes
even physically and spiritually.

Most of us spend a great deal of time, huge portions of
our lives, trying to find solutions to the problems and the
difficulties that seem to invade our lives; our aspects and
our personal space. We're so busy trying to find better and
easier ways out that we miss the beauty of what's around
us, and it's mainly the little things. Things so small we
overlook or ignore them completely. Things so small, even
if we were to see them, we'd come to the conclusion that
they have no significance whatsoever to anything we might
be going through at that present time.

But later on in life we find that it was the little things (those
that seemed to have been of no importance at that time) that
had the greatest impact of all on our lives.

Dedicated to: Broken Glass

(from the "Selected Poems" manuscript)

Don't let this be the last version
To the same ol' song,
Because the lyrics will be in your soul forever
And they've been there all along.
No, really, think about it, Glass,
After all you've been through,
You're so young and talented and the whole world's out there,
And it'll still be there with its arms wide open for you.
I know you're tired of waiting — tired of crying —
Tired of searching for a brighter day,
But whatever you do, Glass,
Don't you ever go giving up on yourself, okay.
Now, about those negative things in your life,
Negativities come with the life we "all" live,
And without them, we'd never learn, now would we?
And there'd be no such thing as: "positive."
So you just take it from me, Jay,
Having been to prison five times and father of four,
We can all still pursue and capture that finer life
And all the days after yesterday get a lot more precious.

Days Of Our Lives

(from the "Sticks and Stones" manuscript)

Once we begin to imagine our past;
wicked grins and painted nails and
green knee-hi spandex tights, we'll
probably be needing at least ten more
fingers in order to keep track of the
years.

And we laugh aloud because we
can't remember the last full moon, or
the last solar eclipse; only knowing that
it did happen, and that we were
there, and that we stood witness with

fifteen hundred other souls — all wanting to
be heard and seen over the other —
and we remember the last most exciting
event being the melee between the North
and South.

And afterwards, we lie awake on our
racks with wide eyes
and dreaming of past lives that we'll never
see again because it never even happened.
And before it's all said and done, we've lived

at least five more lifetimes, but
never even stretched our legs. And at six
a.m., when the whistle blows, the KEEPERS
lift their faces and stuff
their over-sized igloos with extras and

head for wherever it is they
go. And in their absence, old memories
of the little gray houses we once
lived in on Second Avenue in eighty-six
works their way upward and thru our

bones, and we clench our fist and
take our frustrations out by beating our
pillows to feathery pulps.

NICOLE BRADLEY AND KYMI

First, we owe Nicole Bradley aka Sunflower (and her friend

Kymi) an apology for the length of time it has taken us to print her wonderful pieces about family, freedom, friends — and prison. Sometimes, we just get behind the 8-Ball, and it takes us a while to get up to speed. Second, we want to say that the nickname she goes by, Sunflower, suits her upbeat, forward-looking personality — bright, open, full of promise and looking up — and yet tinged with the sadness that goes with being enslaved by prison! Nicole and Kymi write us from their temporary "home" at Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla.

Best Friends

True friends are hard to come by
So many people can be fake
They pretend to like you, and wink their eye
Just to see what they can take
I'm so grateful to have a friend so true
That always tries to comfort me
She's there for me no matter what I do
Which makes me feel so happy.
FBB — our nickname for each other.
You and me — there's no other.
We're best friends forever and ever
Among the snakes that are in this place
Caged up in this human zoo.
You never have been two-faced.
I just see sincerity in you.
No matter what, you'll be in my heart
Wherever I may go,
For even when we're apart
Our bond can only grow.
True friends are hard to come by.
Jazzy, you're my friend.
We're best friends forever and ever.
Our friendship never ends.

Daddy

Daddy, you've always been there by my side
through all my tears I've shed and cried.
When I was down you made me smile.
When I was alone, you stayed awhile.
When I was weak, you showed me love and prayed
for strength from God above.
Daddy, you've always been a hero to me, to come
and save me and set me free.
When times were rough, you still persisted
even when I stubbornly resisted.
But the general knows what is right
never giving up in the heat of the fight.
Daddy you are the wind beneath my wings
leading me to where freedom rings,
for this caged bird will fly one day
all because daddy helped guide the way.
Daddy, there's no father better than you.
You're number one, and I love you.

**So many people
can be fake
They pretend to like
you, and wink
their eye
Just to see what they
can take**

Freedom

Here I am sitting in my cell
Thinking of my family,
Wondering... what the hell
Is going on with me!
I take the time to read my mail
And wishing I were free.
Sitting here in solitaire
And praying on my knees.
I can control my thoughts, but not my tears —
And especially not authority.
For they control my life and all that's here
Putting me on scrutiny
When will this ever end
So I can be happy
So then I can once again
Be with my dear family
So much pain is in my heart
For time has passed me by.
It's been so long that I've been gone
And all I do is cry.
I try to do what is right
But all I do is wrong.
Here I pray to God at night
and I sing this sad song.
I hope that he hears my plight
And takes this pain away.
To fill my heart with such delight
And make me free one day!

**...for this caged bird
will fly one day
all because daddy
helped guide the way.**

Ad Seg (aka The Hole)

Here in our cell up late at night
Sunflower and Kymi trying to make this poem right
Friends from before other than here
Now we share a room on the top tier
We talk to our neighbors through a plug in the wall
Looking out for the cops that are down the hall
We laugh and we giggle, and have water fights
Writing our neighbors stupid-ass kites
We make a guitar with underwear strings
While we try to sing to the noise it brings
We don't go to sleep until breakfast is here
For the day to go slow is what we fear
When a new girl arrives we yell out the door:
"Did you come prepared?" and "What are you here for?"
We fish under the door with a torn sheet
Our lines are connected by a piece of meat
Discussion of family brings tears to our eyes
Soon enough we'll be saying our own good-byes
Sunflower and Kymi write this to The Beat Within
Now we put this poem to an end

SALVADOR PLASENCIA

is a new writer to our pages of The Beat Without. He is 22 years old and currently serving a life sentence in Pelican Bay State Prison. He writes to us from the SHU and drops some heavy game on us. We always like to hear from new people and we hope he encourages other folks to drop a few lines on us. He has lots to offer.

Young Sacrifices

Before this letter is launched into thin air, I would like to express my utmost acknowledgements to all The Beat supporters, writers, assistant editors, senior editors, and co-founders. Also my acknowledgement to all those that I haven't mentioned! Well, first off allow myself to formally introduce myself, and how I came across your well-respected establishment. My name is Salvador; I am a 22-year-old male serving a life sentence at Pelican Bay State Prison. I have been within CDC for the last six years of my life. If you do the after math you will discover that I have been in prison since I was a youth.

I was seventeen years old when I was convicted and sent to prison. However, due to your warning sign on how certain letters can be hazardous and it can be used to incriminate you in the court of law, I will be forced to leave certain story tales out. But for the most part I fully embrace the dedication and motivation that your people have in order to do all within your reach to help the lost souls of our youth.

Before I go any further, I came across your newsletter just a few days ago and it has inspired me to write this letter, plus I will include a moving touch of words for our young people that struggle day in and day out.

Furthermore, unfortunately I would have no opportunity to see my words printed in your newsstand because such hostile environment that I live in. Also to add, I am currently in a court battle with my whole conviction, therefore it has paralyzed my financial needs. But most of all the importance is that our youth, the future, recognize my whole purpose and objective here, and also to acknowledge your true existence by allowing our youth to grow and develop in a positive light.

If there were more programs like yours out in the open where our youth can turn to, I don't think I would be sitting in prison writing this letter to your publisher. However, I am more than grateful for this grand opportunity to express and explore my struggles, hardships, and down falls in life. At the same time, we all will explore the prevailing of overcoming these obstacles and truly discover the treasure of life.

I understand your publication has been disrupted by negative aspects of gang writing. Unfortunately you may be forced to have new policies and restrictions. Nevertheless, your program should overcome this small stepping-stone that is blocking forward progress in achieving your goals and objective that is to help the youth to follow positive examples from other youth that lead them where they are at as of right now. So as stated previously, I hope they recognize the positive impact that your publication gives and set out.

It is possible that your policies and restrictions are in force so that you are not allowed to display any written pieces that are not related to your topics. Then my letters, stories, and poems can be viewed by eye readers such as yourself that are reading these few lines.

Furthermore, I am seeking any programs that have to do with certain establishments of Prop 21. Proposition 21 is a law that was granted in order to uphold juveniles as adults and can be convicted as adults. I have written to a few services but hopefully your program can guide me in the right path. Last but not least, any response will be acknowledged and respected. Thank you for your time.

A Lifetime To Go

Can you feel the silent beat of your heart racing at an incredible speed that you cannot control? With each beat is a thought and with each thought the beat of your heart goes even faster. Surrounded by an undetected pain, a pain that is undiscovered which only you feel. No one feels it, sees it, but you know it is there. You desperately search for this pain but the pain is still a mystery. You sit and wait to discover your faith; a path that you know has no end. A life filled with nonsense and irony and pain. You can't escape it. You know what waits ahead.

Surrounded by cool walls, walls that will soon be your image of your future. Long and dark nights will be your only comfort, with days that would be hated because they are only seen through windows. The things that our world has to offer and people's soul desire would have no coexistence to you. A mistake that can never be undone, which will forbid your happiness. Strip from head to toe now you are forced to allow them to strip your God given rights, which no one has the right to take away completely.

You lose touch with reality, you can't understand why, but you know deeply you will be forced to live out your life this way. Thoughts of the past will soon fade away. Through the years you figure out a way to shut out your deepest memories away because frozen thoughts will only hinder your progress. You look forward for brighter and better days but they only get worse. You try to put things into perspective but your future paints a darker road. Day in, day out, you wonder why you were put in this world to sit and wait between two cool walls for the remainder of your life. Nothing fulfills your happiness anymore but you know you got to keep striving on.

Just look around you, does it fill your thoughts with wonders? So many things can run through your mind: thoughts, feelings, likes, dislikes, angers, joys. Unfortunately I could only feel the beat of my heart that I have no control of. So my only soul desire in this world is to erase my thoughts because I cannot control the beat of my heart.

To The Beat Within

Before this magical ink takes its course of enlightenment and profound knowledge to The Beat readers, which hopefully allows them to develop and grow in positive aspects and strides, this form of writing is inspired by a topic I read by Amanda "Pros and Cons in the System."

But in order to relate, understand, and most importantly decode and read between the lines of understanding. This will take you and all readers to the main point, reason and objective of the system without using \$100 words to show off your smartness or level of education. Because what I have gained from this establishment is that it was formed for all youth to change their bad judgments and experiences in order to prevail in this world.

I am also inspired by the many other contributions from all over, young, old, men, women, etc. My profound acknowledgement to all.

You lose touch with reality, you can't understand why, but you know deeply you will be forced to live out your life this way. Thoughts of the past will soon fade away.

TOMMY BRENNICK

Tommy Brennick, who resides in the Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, California, drops some heat on The Beat this week. He states the youngsters are his inspiration and we hope that he can be someone else's inspiration to pick up the pen and write. Come on — you know this is some tight poetry!

**Well, my mother died
when I was sixteen
Now I only see her
when I pray or dream.**

Hey Beat

As always my blessings to you and all who read and write you. As always it is late night in my cell, it seems to be my time to write and rhyme.

I have found myself with the urge to write and express and expose myself. It feels many ways at once to do so. But most of all it is great to have an outlet like The Beat. I figure I have had this need for sometime and at least someone will read it and have an understanding where I am coming from. In some ways I figure you may wonder why it took me this long to start this self-journey trip. I could not tell you for sure. But seeing the people — youngsters mainly that write The Beat and let rip with the way they think and feel from inside themselves is what kicked it off for me!

If I had more to offer other than my words I would give it to you. But at this time all I have is me. It may not be much to some, but it is all I can do. I know I come from a different place than most, however, I can only keep it as real as it comes to my pen from my brain. I only know this much, I never seen this day coming. It is frustrating knowing a better tomorrow when you had people showing you better yesterday. In all this, i.e., writing you, it is not about so much as seeing it in The Beat (though I admit that is good as it might help someone learn from an old project dog) as it is learning about myself. By trying to help someone, I am sending all I have put on paper tonight. If you need it, use it for what you deem fit, just don't wipe your butt with it. Ya know, I know my penmanship is not the best, so hang with it please. I am working on making it better.

I bless you for all you bring out and put out of and to people, thanks to you I can now stop hurting myself and others and rather try helping.

Thank you.

**I don't know why I'd
rather try,
To help someone stand
on their own instead of**

I Don't Know

I don't know why I'd rather try,
To help someone live instead of see them die.
I don't know why I'd rather try,
To help someone up instead of see them high.
I don't know why I'd rather try,
To help someone laugh instead of see them cry.
I don't know why I'd rather try,
To help someone find self-truth instead of see them live a lie.
I don't know why I'd rather try,
To help someone find freedom instead of see them never fly.
I don't know why I'd rather try,
To help someone stand on their own instead of see them rely.
I guess I just don't know why I'd rather try,
To help someone
Instead of see me not try.

Nothing To Be Proud Of

Our mothers and fathers taught us right from wrong.
Mom said, say "yes, please" and "thank you," and never treat
a girl wrong.
Dad said keep your word and always stand strong,
Mom said go to church and at all times be polite.
Dad says do what you think is worth it
and always put up a fight.
Mom said, baby, be a good boy and always stay in school.
Dad told me to work hard and be nobody's fool.
I find myself at the age of 39 turning 40 in jail,
And in all mom and dad told me, all I did was fail.
I took to the projects not looking back,
Robbing and junking, car chases and crack
After sixth grade in school I hit the street,
Making and taking off on those that lived right
Looking for a rep as I ran through the night
Girls, church, and work meant nothing to me,
Drugs, crime, and prison was all I could see
The only school I needed was right from the street,
Gangsters were my teachers, and doing crime and time was
my graduating feat.
Before I was me, they had my plan, another project dog with
nothing left inside
Tell me, mom and dad,
how turning 40 in prison should bring me pride.
Well, my mother died when I was sixteen
Now I only see her when I pray or dream.
My dad he was strong but then I seen him fade,
After he watched my sister erode to death from AIDS.
Now I reach out for them but find an empty space,
Please dad and mom show me how to get out of this place.
I'll listen now and stay in school
I'll be polite and not be a fool
I'll treat people right, work very hard every day,
I am saying "please," mom .I think it's worth it, dad I'll be so
thankful — show me the way.
Man, this turning older has left me understanding mom
and dad
Was only teaching me what was real in all they had
To say, though we were poor they tried to give me all they had
Knowledge and faith to live my life right,
And a way out of that endless rep-chasing night.
If you see these words and think me a lame,
Understand this, as you are I once was sitting in a cell with
nothing to claim.

SUNMAN'S SLIGHT

From our old and dear friend, SunMan'sLight at Salinas Valley State Prison, comes this terribly sad piece about what it means to have spent most of one's life wearing a prison mask. And while he commits himself to laying down the mask as he faces his mortality — and life sentences — even sadder is the realization that the only ones who read his words (the only ones who seem to care) are "the captive audience who are also reaching out for answers as I am, and find very few." How much this man has to teach! How little the world is interested in learning!

All The World's A Stage . . . And Prison Is More So

Youth and adult penal institutions are no more than a stage upon which a cast of actors are flung to perform. Without written script to guide them, each has a role they must act out to the best of their ability all the while realizing the play will have one of many predictable endings.

As these actors, we put on another face: Eighteen year old, blond-haired, blue-eyed Sonny acts out the role of "white boy;" frightened twenty-year-old Michael becomes "187;" intelligent, determined Nathan is convincing in his role of "Weasel;" and shy, introverted, baby-faced Justin, debuting on the big stage after several years as an understudy in CYA, convincingly takes on the role of "Judy."

As actors, we become someone we are not in "real life." To survive this profession we have chosen, we must be successful in moving our audience to forget we are actors, and convince all its members we are in fact who we portray on the stage. It is a fact, only the actors who originally survive their critics, and become respected in their profession, will be those who are 100% convincing.

Upon this prison stage we change one face for another. We step before our audience with this story titled "life and death," and we understand our survival depends upon how well we do.

Unfortunately, "success" has its disadvantages. First, most of us are so good in the roles we have taken on that without conscious thought, we bury somewhere deep inside of us who we really are, or were, and become what we once recognized as a character in a role play.

Young, troubled, often frightened Sonny becomes the shaved head, tattooed, racist. 20-year-old, frightened Michael lives up to his role name of "187" when he stabs a man to death for staring at him. Intelligent, determined Nathan is beyond suspicion in his role of the devious "Weasel" as he survives by preying upon the weak and unsuspecting. Shy, introverted baby-faced Justin becomes lost in the role of "Judy" as he seeks out men who will protect him.

Lost deeply within the character, having long forgotten it is in fact only a role, rarely is the journey back to Sonny, Michael, Nathan and Justin began. It is too long, too arduous, often felt not to be worth the effort, risking the niche fought so hard for. Few choose to begin that journey back.

Yes, prison is a stage. To survive it we have been pre-warned as we enter that we must change our face, take another, along with a role and unwritten script that we hope will cause the audience members to applaud rather than to boo. Those of us

whose acting abilities are poor will be booed from the stage, soon to become prey to ridicule and disrespect. Those who succeed will be allowed to continue on, will be respectfully applauded but — we must remain astutely aware — the audience is filled with people who are always looking for reason(s) to critique and bring suspicion that as we age our acting abilities should be checked and questioned.

There is no way around it. That time will come each of us are much older, and the years will have taken their toll. As is the way in a pack of wolves, only the strong and those who remain able to contribute to the survival of the pack are allowed to remain. Those who cannot are either left behind to fend for themselves or are set upon and killed by the others. We perform, very much aware that it is extremely rare an actor does so well that he gains such stature he will be surrounded and protected as he further ages and becomes lame.

This is what I have known for 43 years. Motivated by nature's survival instinct, I have continued to play the game, act out my role, though aging has forced me to slow it down. I am aware around me are those who have begun to glance my way and no doubt silently, for now, are questioning if I am going to keep up or not. I am asking myself, "Well, old boy, what do you do now that you have made your journey? Will it become obvious you have found who you really are and are now struggling not to expose yourself? Does it really matter now that you are in your sixties and tired of "Prison Hollywood?"

"Not really," I tell myself. "All my life I cowardly hid behind the character I created and in which I so successfully convinced my audience I deserved respectful applause as well as, however grudgingly given, acceptance in a world filled with critics."

My character was convincing. I played a murderer, a predator, a shot-caller, a friend, an enemy. I did well. Now, as I look at the kids who graduated from CYA, the upcoming and blossoming young actors around me, I know my time is near up — the competition is too keen. The only question I can reasonably ask myself now is, "Have I entertained well enough I now deserve not to be left behind, or could it be that the best I can hope for is that I will not be preyed upon?"

This life sentence I am serving gives me reason to hesitate, but what really sways me is, I know it takes much more man to be who I was than to bend over to peer pressure.

So, I have decided I am going to leave the stage, retire as an actor, and be who I left behind when I entered prison at the age of eighteen. If that becomes unacceptable amongst my peers, so be it. After all, there are things in this life worth dying for, as there are worth living for. Being myself again, being who I "really" am, is one of them.



**Never
believing in
religion, but
now all at
once facing
a true form
of Judgment
Day**

ESMOND SANFORD

The following piece comes from first-time writer Esmond Sanford, who sent it to us all the way from Madison County Jail in Edwardsville, Illinois. He came across The Beat in the Prisoner's Resource Directory, and he wrote us asking for a subscription. He also mentioned that he is a poet, and dropped this poem as "a little sample of my type of poetry." Needless to say, we feel his type of poetry and look forward to printing more of it soon.

Coming To Terms

Alone in rage, not being able to feel or love
Trying to find my way back to the place I once was
Not being free from the vices of the street I sold my soul to play
Never believing in religion, but now all at once facing a true form of Judgment Day
Combine for my sins today and in my past
I realize the sorrow of being hurt and the ongoing torment that will last
How can I find my truth? Where is my own voice?
How can I find goodness when bad has been my ultimate choice?
But yet, as I sit in humbleness and deeply serene, I face the demon that has been chasing me
Now I know and I see true
That coming to terms is atonement, and knowing you only can love you . . .

PROFESSOR BLACKMIND AND N8 BLACKMIND

There are few words we would rather read from the truly gifted Professor Blackmind than these: "I'm back, y'all." Veteran readers of The Beat will recognize this multi-talented young man's contributions to these pages as a poet, a writer, and the founder of Poetic Mindz Family — other young men locked away whom he has "freed" by introducing them to the power of the pen. Sparing himself nothing, he described himself as "a bum" during his temporary fall just before his 18th birthday. And, despite the fact that he's in jail, the following letter, art, poems ("Go To Sleep" and "Wake Up") — plus two pieces he's inspired his brother N8 Blackmind (Nate Smith) to write for the first time — we're ecstatic to announce: **HE'S BACK!**

I Will Live

Life ain't easy in the county jail
651 I Street got me trapped in this cell
I'm only 22 and I might never again see daylight
I ain't did shhh, that's why I fight
Lord help me, this ain't the life for me
I can't think, my future is hard to see
My bro told me to write it down
I did and this is how it sounds
My life ain't through, it can't be over
This judge is not gone screw me over
I will live

-N8 Blackmind

Go To Sleep

If you tired and cranky
Go to sleep
If you like to start shhh
Someone will put you to sleep
If you been up all night
Get some sleep
If you ain't got no energy
You need to sleep
If the Devil you tweakin'
Put him to sleep
If you feel like shhh
Go to sleep
If somebody make you sick
You gotta sleep
When you feel hella good
You got some sleep
But you stuck in the 'hood
It's hard to sleep
But if your mind is hella clear
It came from sleep
But if you work during the day
At night you sleep
Put the Devil to sleep

For God's Sake

In the county jail for the first time
Letting out the county rhymes
Fighting for my life on the 3rd Floor
The judge tryin' to wash me, yo
I'm here, and I ain't did shhh
They need to find some other way to get rich
Smoked out DA comin' to court high
So they mind tells them to believe the witnesses' lies
One whole year, I'm tired of this joint
I wanna live my life, I don't see the point
My lil' bro on the other side of this floor
They got me, but they wanted more
They wanna stress me until I break
Just let me go for God's sake

-N8 Blackmind

To The Beat

My main man Michael made me laugh when he asked me if I would continue to write The Beat. I had to let him know that writing The Beat is mandatory, and I would rather have it no other way. I fell off and got distracted for a while, but I will never lose my complete focus.

I told Michael that I have a strong feeling that next year (2006) will be a very, very successful year for The Beat. I even named 2006 "The Year of The Beat." The Beat will shine like the number one stunna's platinum grill on a sunny spring morning. This vision I have is real, like Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

There are only so many words to express my anticipation for next year's "Beat Revolution." It on! I'll leave it like that.

Anyway, I'm currently at Sacramento County Main Jail working on my first (of three) memoirs tentatively titled, "Solo: My 18th Year," and writing these new pieces for The Beat. I'm back, y'all, and I got six months worth of real shhh to keep you posted. So, if you don't know who I be, now you know.

Much love to Michael, Dave, and the rest of my family at The Beat and BWO.

Wake Up!

Crystal meth wakes you up in the morning
But Jesus wakes you every day
Even when you're too sleepy
to see that you're going down
Not just coming down from meth
I WOKE UP to see where I was heading
I had a one-way ticket to Hell
I was at the point of no return
I was a bum working for the Devil
Who controlled me and tried to kill me
Bringing me physical and mental pain
Then laughing and saying, "You're going to be a
tweaker for life"
That's when I WOKE UP
Without meth, aka Satan's Sweet-N-Low
I told Satan to piss off
And made him eat his own shhh
'Cause no one controls my life
No one but me, the Blackmind Prophet and God
Satan still tries to whisper in my ear
But I spit in his face and laugh
'Cause I got a new boss and his name is Jesus
and he don't never stir me wrong or try to kill me
Ee always feel my pain and tries to heal me
Forget Satan, he's the real tweaker
Let him tweak alone
WAKE UP!

**Satan still tries to whisper in
my ear
But I spit in his face
and laugh**



KING YELLA

Great to hear from our old friend King Yella who dazzled us with his in your face lyrics and ideas form the max unit in 150. Today he writes us from Preston/CYA in lone CA. In his latest piece King Yella delivers an update on his life as well as a reflection of his past????? (Donna)

Dear Beat Within Readers

How it's goin'? Me? I'm doin' cool. Now I'm on a working lodge and workin' on time cuts. You know, the work is overly hard for ten cents an hour, but you know it's benefitting me mainly in stayin' occupied, feel me? At the end of a job, I feel like I've truly accomplished something, which I have, ya dig it? I know my fellow residents been on they thang. It's been kinda hard to write in here due to the busy schedule that I have been assigned to.

As a child, I was distant. I didn't socialize much wit' people I didn't know well. I'd daydream about a lot of possibilities . . . You know, what could happen/could've happened, etc. The world was my playground. You know, I love to travel and explore, sightsee, study every living creature that didn't communicate to my understanding. From ants to anteaters, I was curious. While other kids were watching Saturday morning cartoons, my sister, cousin, and I, were at the Flea Market putting our money together to buy exploring materials. You know, binoculars, nets, fishing poles, pocket-knives, tents, small pans, and cooking utensils, etc. . . . Or on our way to 5th Ave. and Marina on bikes to look for old boats to rebuild.

At the same time while I was doing these things, I had another life, a night life (selling drugs). I didn't make much at first because a lot of people would pass me by because I was so young. "You're still a baby." That's what a lot of them would say! I was eight years old when I started selling drugs. My big cousins would lace me on game. I saved my lunch money for two school weeks, which was a dollar a day, two if I was good. In class, I had got put on and ever since, I've been street hustlin' . . . I know y'all like, "Where was moms and pops?" Well, they were at home. See, they'll think I'm goin' to my grandpa's house to just spend the night, but really, I was goin' to spend the night on the turf. While everybody was watchin' out for the police and potential threats, I was watchin' out for all that, and my parents, as well.

During my junior high years I'd sell weed while school was in and crack when school was out. By this time, getting' money was bein' taken for granted by me 'cause it was comin'. I didn't see it as wrong 'cause everybody gettin' what they want. I want money; they want drugs.

It's like a Cowboy-Indian trade. They say go to school and learn, and I said, "You go to school to earn, learn, and if you got a blunt, burn." That was my motto. I guess I was so small because I never really got any sleep. I'd sleep every other two days. I didn't force it. It just was. I'd be asleep after stayin' up all night, but after a few yawns, I'd be energized again and just stay up. I can't resist the sight of dawn. It's lovely watching the night turn morning, birds talking, and the night air makes way for the fresh morning air. It's lovely.

Nowadays, when I was out recently, I'll check in more because hella youngsters killin' each other, and I don't feel untouchable anymore because I'm now more in touch with what we call "reality." Back in the day, I thought I'll never die, grow old, or go to jail, but I'm experiencing it all every day of my life, physically, as well as mentally. Status, power, and respect, is what we all strive for in life. Some people/most people don't even know it. I've been livin' a pointless life wit' no direction for ten years, wit' one prerogative (get money), and I ain't got nothin' to show for it but seven years max in the Y and a rebellious attitude that I ain't shakin'. All that for ten years of wastin' my life? Man, I feel played, straight up, but that's how it is. If I had a choice to change my past, I wouldn't change it, though, because I learned and I still am learning from my decisions. That's just how it is.

The game was like exploring 'cause I was being introduced into a whole otha world and way of livin', wit'out restrictions. You know, like Chucky Cheese says, "Where a kid can be a kid." Well, this was like "Where an outlaw can be an outlaw." As a kid, I was always into something dangerous or bad, fighting, shooting dice, and playing pongs durin' class. At the end of every summer, moms would ask you, "Ready for school?" Fo' sho! I couldn't wait. I wanted to know was school ready fo' me? In junior high/high school, I'd socialize a lil' with everyone, but there's always a certain crowd who one identifies himself/herself. The crowd that robs classes, backpacks, ice cream men, and cuts school was the crowd that I identified myself wit', and a lot of those people I hung wit' back then, I'm hangin' wit' in here. It's like a reunion up in here. The next step: Canes or caskets. I'm out.

**KENNY, TOO COOL THE POET, JACOBS**

Here's a little something something from our friend, Kenny, Too Cool the Poet, Jacobs. We've been corresponding with Kenny on and off for the last year or so, and we're happy to say things are on again. Check out his most recent piece below, "Under Construction." He writes from High Desert State Prison in Susanville, CA.

Under Construction

Under construction to establish a solid foundation,
building myself as if I were a nation exempt of government.

A legacy is nothing without circumstance and long-term vision,
Victory is void if there's no struggle or tension,
Devotion to achieve.

Diligent working faith is a must to sustain the dream,
Belief is a system followed and applied like instructions,
Everything first starts in the mind, then develops under construction,

Operating with the focus of a surgeon making a healthy outcome,
No time to lay back until all is said and done,

When the picture is painted perfectly clear in it's manifestation,
Similar to being conceived after a pregnancy process, witness a mother's alleviation,
defining one's self is a daily function, physically and mentally,

Under construction.

**building
myself as if I
were a nation
exempt of
government.**

TOMAS ALANIS

We've known Tomas Alanis aka Gypsy since we were doing workshops in Chad from 2000 to 2001. Unfortunately, those workshops were cancelled and our contact with writers in CYA since then has been minimal. Nevertheless, Tomas has remained a loyal BWO contributor, and is gracing our pages with poetry he wrote as a juvenile hall resident between the ages of 13 and 15. Tomas now writes us from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent

The Word I Beg For

Memories is all I have left of you, the different times that we had,
Remembering is only good when it makes you happy instead of sad.
Eternity is what I'll spend wondering where it is or was we went wrong
Hoping that I find the answer and that an eternity just isn't that long.
Regrets are what I sort through, knowing I shouldn't have any at all,
But the stack of them is so high without enough balance upon me is where they'll fall.
Crushed is how I've felt and have you to thank for it,
Out of all the yelling and debates and you still try to say I'm afraid to commit.
Young is what I am, and the best thing I have in store,
But you look at the first letter of all these things, you'll come to find the word I beg for.

**Once you think you got it,
Something beyond belief has come to evolve.**

The Mystery Within

To the depths of one's mind is where each tries to climb
Hoping that we come across an interesting thought that's left behind.
Comprehension and sense are something of a dream, Now
people look so deep into concepts,
That they forget the simplicity of its means.
For pick and dissect each other is what we do,
In order for us to not feel insecure
Because we first learn all we can about you.
The world is a riddle, a puzzle that goes unsolved,
Once you think you got it,
Something beyond belief has come to evolve.
When times have come to change, from now to the past, We
see such order in chaos,
As frowns are the same as laughs.
They say that there are enemies amongst us,
And that they're everywhere.
So we watch all the shadows in dark places,
Wondering if they're there,
Oppression is overlooked and dismissed as nothing more,
Greed fuels a burning flame,
And defiance leads to a war.
As I sit back and watch all of this unfold,
I stay deaf to those who say,
"The future is almost here, but be careful of what's untold."
For I am the true secret, the one that can't be missed,
But I'm neither here or there,
For I only dwell within this.

The Feelings Of The World

Misery has company, who's also known as pain,
Pain has a twin that feels identical and pleasure
is his name.
Confusion has born once from the marriage of
love and hate,
Hate adored love, for love's passion of debate.
Sorrow crossed a street and came to pass by joy,
Understanding watched them both when he was
a little boy.
Pride and ignorance are the very best of friends
However, patience and wisdom are the enemies
of them.
Confidence teases anxiety like the day is long
Dignity talks to confidence to show him he's
wrong.
Interest talks to doubt and along comes despair,
Humble shows up to let doubt know that humble
does know care.
Hope has a sister, her name is known as faith,
Gratitude has no feelings for either of them and
sees them as the same.

The Eyes Of The Beholder

For in the eye of the beholder is what's kept and held so dear,
So look and search real hard for something that is not there.
Truth be told we look for what we want and not for anything more,
We provide ourselves with confidence that helps us to perform.
They say if you look hard enough you'll surely come to find,
What it is your searching for because it's all in your mind.
You say he or she is working late when you know cheating is the real,
You lie and say you're madly in love when you know betrayal's what you feel.
But you are the beholder! The one who holds the golden eye,
So when reality comes to set in, don't act as if you're surprised.
For all along you knew what they were all about
You cast aside reality and didn't indulge in doubts
So for the next time that your special vision goes to work,
Be careful of what you search for and balance out its worth.

**Confusion
has born
once
from the
marriage of
love
and hate**

THE POETIC PRISONER

We hear a lot about sibling rivalry, so when we read of a brother's undying love for a brother, it is a deeply moving experience. Here, The Beat's Poetic Prisoner pours out his heart to his younger brother, desperately trying to keep him from falling into the pit of prison (or the Halls, or CYA). All we can do is to hope that love, so powerfully expressed, has its intended effect here. Knowing both brothers as we do, we are holding our collective breath.

From The Heart

Dear little brother,
It hurts me to see you struggle.
Constantly feuding with our mother,
And on the verge of getting into a whole lot of trouble.
Nobody on this earth
Has more in common with me than you.
You've been my best friend since the day of your birth
So I know exactly what you're going through.
You can't stand living at home,
So you'd rather be homeless.
You want so bad to be grown,
But your actions reflect that you ain't grown yet.
I'd bleed for a lifetime
If only you would understand
That right now isn't the right time
To rush into becoming a man.
I've been where you are,
So I know how hard it can be.
You're brighter than a shooting star,
So I want you free with me.
You have the potential to achieve great credentials,
And that's what's eating away at my heart.
You could be sitting presidential
If you'd wise up and be smart.
My greatest fear in life
Is seeing you behind barbed wire fences.
So I'd sacrifice everything I'm doing right
Just so you wouldn't suffer such harsh consequences.
Tears fall, but I can't bawl
Because I have to stay strong for us.
The world... I'd crawl around it all
If it meant getting you out of this stuff.
I try to kick it with you a lot
Because if you're unsafe, I want to be there.
I wish this shhh would stop,
You just don't know how much I care.
It's okay if this goes over your head,
But communication is the only way to start.
I don't want you to end up in jail or dead,
So I wrote you this from the heart.

**You slept in my arms,
And trusted me with
your innocence.
I saw no set backs
in you,
There were only
benefits.**

**You have the potential to
achieve great credentials,
And that's what's eating
away at my heart.**

A Kiss

When I first came into this office,
My only motive was to get paid.
Then I was hypnotized by the most beautiful eyes
Which looked to me like sparkling jade.
I was introduced to you,
But my mouth didn't know what to say.
For my heart was captivated by this piece of art,
And I kept thinking, "I wish I could die today."
The way your long dangling earrings
Decorated your well created ears.
It made you look so sophisticated
That I could've stared at you for years.
Exotic hair kept begging for me to make us an erotic pair,
But you were too fine to approach.
Plus, your body kept calling out to me
Like it wanted to be groped.
I was afraid of what might happen,
So I attempted to keep my distance.
Acting as though I wasn't interested
When in reality you were number one on my wish list.
Then finally we kicked it,
And exchanged ideas all night long.
Right then I thought that if pursuing you wasn't right,
Then this time I'd just have to be wrong.
You slept in my arms,
And trusted me with your innocence.
I saw no set backs in you,
There were only benefits.
For as you laid there all I could imagine
Was kissing those full, soft lips.
You breathed slightly chest heaving up and down
I just couldn't take this shit.
So I gently caressed your forehead,
Hoping my thoughts weren't too loud.
You laid in my arms on the first night,
Just the thought made me too proud.
I must've fell in love with you at that moment
Because when you woke up I saw an angel.
You became my best friend
When the night before you were virtually a stranger.
The next morning I was
The happiest man alive.
For a woman as beautiful as her deep green eyes
Allowed me to sleep by her side.
However, one thing was missed,
And it was starting to get me pissed.
At this very moment I wished
To feel the healing power of those sweet, moist lips.
The problem was this:
My feelings were mixed.
I knew the amazement of last night did exist,
But didn't want to ruin it with an unexpected twist.
We were together,
But did we fit?
You answered me by leaning over and sealing forever
With just one simple kiss.

NICK FLOYD

Yet another old friend finds the time to deliver his important lyrics to us Beat readers. We welcome and praise the very focused Nick Floyd back to The Beat. Nick, too, was a standout, POW kind of guy when he would write and share his message from the max unit in 150. Unfortunately, today he writes us from Santa Rita County Jail where he awaits his sentence. We miss having in the workshops, but are glad that he is still down to lace us at The Beat.

Trapped

I'm trapped in this cage and I can't get out.
My mind is in one big drought.
In Rita, I ain't got no clout.
It's almost impossible to sleep because your heart
constantly weeps.
25-minute visits behind glass, how long does this
pain have to last?
I wish I could go to sleep, wake up, and all this
would be part of my past.
I got 12 bullets over my head.
The only thing I look forward to are visits and
spreads. Half the people in here got cases that
involve Feds.
I can't wait until the day I get to lay on a real bed.
When I was in the Hall, I used to complain about
this and that.
When I look back,
I see that at the Hall I was living hella fat.
Now I sit in Santa Rita's max
Where it's impossible to relax.
All I can do is write to The Beat and state the facts.
Rita is the last place you wanna be.
It's the true definition of the belly of the beast.

How I Feel!

I got a body that feels like it's filled with hollows.
I'm here today and wonder if I'll be here tomorrow.
My heart and soul are soaked in pain and sorrow.
I gave this system my life on a silver platter.
Just thinkin' about it gives me a weak bladder.
What's the matter?
Did I go a little too deep?
At least you can sleep.
I'm lucky to get an appetite to eat.
This cell is hot as hell
And this sink water doesn't come from a well.
One sip makes you sick.
My life feels like a clock without a tick.
My bones are aching from the steel slab.
This is truly havin' it bad.
How sad that by us being locked up, the DA is glad.
That's why I've decided to change my life.
I'll be damned if the DA gets to laugh twice.
Just a little advice:
When you get out, live right
and stay low-key like little mice.

CHUNKY

Travoy M. aka Chunky, currently resides in ROP (Rites of Passage), a boot camp-like facility in San Andreas, California. He writes plays, poems and essays, often about what's going on in his life, and reads voraciously.

Baby Girl# 1

I miss you.
I remember when we didn't like each other,
but times have changed.
I really miss you.
I wish you could stop banging and be a role model
for your lil' sis.
You lead by example, but you don't listen.
You wanna go home, but you can't even act right
without getting locked up the next day.
I love you, but you need to get your shhh together.
You don't wanna end up in Chowchilla.
Don't change for me,
do it for yourself,
so you can be a better person and stop datin' these thugs.
Find somebody who won't dog you out!
I hope you change before it's too late.
You will find out sooner or later.
You will get it,
I hope.
To my beloved sister.

Been Thinking

Been thinking
About all the people I hurt
Where I'm going to be in five years
Dead, in jail, or a better person
To change for the better
Not for the worse
Have a wife and kid
But I have a low self-image
Dealing with probation
Missin' home
I know the probation department
Wants me to change
So when I go home
I will not disrespect my parents
My mom is hella supportive
I took everything
I had for granted
But now I really do appreciate
What people do for me
I look back and I think
About all the chances I had
But I didn't listen
I wanted to fit in
But that didn't get me nowhere
But here in ROP
Doing my time
I hope the next time
I make the right choice

**I hope you change
before it's too late.**

TRE'MAYNE CARROLL

Man, now that's an entrance — this man along with his various writing partners — has something to say! First-time writer, Tre'Mayne Carroll aka Tha '72 Dolphin, delivers a host of pieces from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA. This man can definitely flow and throw down wise prose. His critique of the Three Strikes Law is right on, but it also makes us think that these days, folks really need to be aware of the company they keep — it can be the difference between freedom and a lifetime in prison. Props, too, to Michael Turner aka J Tha Strugg who collaborates with Tre'Mayne on the flow, "Eternal Tears." We, and you, after you read the following pieces, will be hoping to hear from Tre'Mayne soon.

Irreconcilable Differences . . .

Soldiers against tha system, convicts against tha capturers. In California, it's blues (most of us) versus green, brothers, sisters, and those caught in between.

We must become one with this struggle, or we'll continue to be victims of it. Don't become products of these caged environments. Figure out ways o be productive behind enemy lines and beyond. Let's never forget our loved ones are out there, and that's where we're tryin' to get.

How can you be down? When you have an extra stamp and idle time, scribble down your anger in a productive fashion and forward them to these politicians. Also, encourage your teammates to do likewise. Some of our trailblazers, like tha brother George Jackson, took their last breath(s) squabbling with tha oppressors. Therefore, ours shouldn't be taken layin' down.

There was a story where a man said, "I went outside every day with my hammer trying to break, or even chip, this big boulder. Scores of onlookers would come out and watch me sweat for hours, hitting this rock without me even being able to chip it. They called me crazy. For ninety-nine days, this went on. On tha one hundredth day, I went out and hit tha rock one time and it broke in half. The people asked, "Where did you find tha strength to hit tha rock so hard that you could break it in one hit?" I told them, "It wasn't tha one hit that broke tha rock, but tha accumulation of tha multitude of hits that broke tha rock."

My brothers and sisters, in this particular slave/concentration camp, I often feel like that man who was hitting tha rock. Tha majority of tha onlookers here are calling me crazy as I hammer at tha indignities showered on us by tha California Department of Correction and tha insanely political and financially motivated "Three Strikes" law, which I'm sentenced under. You see, I want these brothers to join me with hammers in both hands as I break tha unjust. It's not their fault that they haven't joined me; it's mine. While they've been watchin' me, hoping that I make a breakthrough, I've been watching them, hoping they'd help me make a breakthrough, instead of convincing them that collectively, "we," can break through. Feel that!

Briefly on my situation, California's infamous Three Strikes Law "said" to be aimed at repeat/violent offenders, yet, I'm sentenced to 25 to life for a non-violent crime, and this is my first adult case or conviction. In 1990, as a juvenile, I was sent to California Youth Authority for one crime, for which I was given two strikes. Upon

my release from CYA, I earned my AA degree via tha University of La Verne and Golden West Junior College, while a student/athlete (basketball). In August 1998, my boy and I went to his jeweler to pick up a Rolex that he'd ordered. My boy had about fifteen G's on him, and I too had a pocket full of stones. I "never" entered tha store. Tha jeweler handed my boy a wet (iced out) Rolex, and left him unattended. Well, in tha land of opportunity, of course there are opportunists. My boy bounced out of tha store with tha watch. We pulled off, and later on, I was arrested. I bailed out immediately. A couple of weeks later, I was arrested because tha court said that my bail should've been \$1,000,000 due to my two Juvenile strikes. Anywho, I was subsequently convicted of aiding and abetting a grand theft. A jury of my so-called "peers" (one African I might add) believed that my boy and I planned this, and I was sentenced to 25 to life.

Under tha 3x's law, I'm not eligible for parole until I serve 85% of 25 years (April 2022). In California, if you get 25 years to life for a first-degree murder, you are eligible for parole after 7 years. Imagine that! My boy, who actually took tha watch, he was sentenced to one year of probation. Huh!

Everyone from Dubya (Bush) on down knows this is tha harshest law and violation of tha cruel and unusual punishment amendment ever. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger could have changed tha law, but most of California's prisons are owned by major corporations, so to change tha law would mean they would have about 5,000 inmates to let go — 3,500 of which are African — which, in turn, would mean they would have to shut down a bunch of prisons.

It's a money thang. For tha past two governmental elections, tha California Peace Officers' Union has donated tha most money to Gray Davis' campaign. For Davis to have changed tha law and close a few prisons, he would have been eliminating future officer's jobs, and having to lay off a number of tha current officers, who through campaign contributions, helped give him his job. Gray Davis has presidential aspirations, so instead of committing career suicide, Davis committed mass genocide and opened more prisons to house nonviolent offenders, such as myself, for tha rest of our lives.

But, um, I'll holla at y'all greater later. If you are concerned with my personal plight, tha plight of our tribe, or just want to chop it up wit' a champ — holla and I'll most definitely holla back.

Tha struggle isn't just for "now," it's forever. Be safe and be strong . . .

Loyalty, vision, foresight, and perfect love!



Potential

This life is simple, but at tha same time, complex.

My wife cries potential, yet I wonder if I'm next To be dead or catch an 'L' before I reach tha next page. It's sad that one must experience hell to

overstand tha teachings of tha next stage That's next times three from a real young "G." Right now, there are too many that rhyme like they

feel tha pain of those like me, With no strikes, but I'm on strike three. Only been at tha wrong place at tha wrong times, Phony songs about "months" when sayin' they did

three to nines, Claimin' other figgas handles and struggles. What happened to tha industry bein' lyrical,

Namin' brothas behind triggas and hustles Is it just me or are these rappin' cats pitiful? I'm tha director, producer, and writer 'cause I'm

chin-deep in mud, livin' this flick, Merely inches either way determine if you're a

Blood or a Crip. Across, tha street cats is fearin' me, but I don't

have no African enemies. They floss gats, it's killin' me, scratchin' my car,

not realizin' they can have ten of these, Just like it was one yard at a time for Emmitt

Smith. Bein' an all-time leader is hard, but ambition

makes potential limitless . . .

One Last Cry . . .

Gnut, I been thinkin' about dyin'. I ain't no fronter. Peep this letter to God if you think that I'm lyin'.

O' mighty Allah, today my loc came to me with a hook.

Of course I had somethin' to drop on it 'cause earlier I was scribblin' in my book.

Ironically enough, I was addin' a chapter Regardin' the latest edition that has left my life for tha life hereafter Just when I was able to manage all this weight on my back. I gotta go to tha Spanish artist so he can add another tat on my back.

Fortunately, I don't have to see these names every day Tha constant reminder is that I say them every time that I pray.

When I get free, I'm visitin' all my figgas' gravesites.

I'm takin' a patch 'Cause I'm waitin' to die,

I'm considered tha good apple outta tha batch.

If wishes could come true, I would ask you, Allah, for this: Please bring back to life everybody that's on my list. Based on tha fact that we're all born dyin'.

Since all of our families gotta do all of this cryin'.

Let us all go together, that would be perfect timin'. This is tha last chapter and wish for me and my friends. We could bow out with sad laughter 'cause tha villain would finally win.

Sincerely, your unwanted son.

This game is no longer fun, I'm done . . .

**Well, in tha land of opportunity,
of course there are opportunists.**

TRE'MAYNE CARROLL (CONT.)

Eternal Tears

(from "Physical Force")

(Hook):

Where you at Lord? Eternal tears
Where you at Lord? Eternal tears
Where you at Lord? Eternal tears
Where you at Lord? People dyin' in scores from war,
People cryin' 'cause they can't take tha pain no more.
We livin' poor in tha slums,
While tha President droppin' bombs
Eternal tears be tha outcome,
Where you at Lord? Eternal tears,
Where you at Lord? They killin' my peers . . .

(Verse 1): J Tha Strugg

Eternal tears rain like a storm
Homeless people have no refuge to dodge tha storm,
I swear this world is cold and abnorm'
Babies being sold to strangers
By tha ones that gave birth.
It hurts deeply when drugs are chosen first.
If you hear me, Lord, please flip this world curse that's
causing so much destruction.
I ain't lyin', tha government displays much corruption
Towards us living in poverty.
It ain't no mystery.
Tha misery wanna erase our history,
Bury us six feet deep in tha slums
Real loud from my lungs

(Hook)

(Verse 2): J Tha Strugg

Bombs being dropped ovah seas,
Killing innocent babies fo' currencies.
Federal agencies know my words are truthfully,

So they hate me with a passion
'Cause I aim, shoot, and hit 'em like a lyrical assassin
Rest in peace George Jackson.
Now my people shall see clear

(Verse 2): Tha '72 Dolphin

Smile now, cry later, blood falls from they eyes.
It's foul how these believer haters
flood our youth with lies,
Disguisin' their condescendin' neo-gangsta ways
It's disgustin' watchin' our tribemates
Socially descendin' prayin' for better days
Don't have no oil, precious jewels or views of your own.
They bomb you, enslave you and have you callin' prison
your home

(Verse 3): Tha '72 Dolphin

To all tha diehards on these yards, they killin' us softly.
Two angels tried to uplift me.
Somethin' made me shout, "Get up of me"
Bush is Saddam-like, buryin' us alive in mass graves. I'm
pushin' this Islam, but I feel like I'm half-dead, half-slave.
All I hear is content poundin' from concrete huts in
chants.
Soldiers that fear resistance soundin' like gorillas with
nuts tha size of ants,
Beatin' on our chest just to see if there's a heart there.
Cheatin', takin' small breaths of stress, blowin' hot air,
We turn on televisions tryin' to escape
Hands burn that sum up decisions equalin' yellow tape.
Tha only time tha mailman visits a young visionary
Is to drop off flicks of my young tribemates on tha front
of obituaries
Things that make tha average sad makes me laugh.
Does this make me a savage? I'm bad at math.
I'll shed a tear when I see all
of my people on Allah's path . . .

Concept Behind "One Last Cry"

I write tons of songs with my boy, Gnut. He happens to be from tha "Blood" Camp, while I sprouted from tha "Crip" seed. We are both students of higher learnin' and out to eradicate, not the gangs because in essence those tribes are very relevant, but out to eradicate gang activity and recidivism.

Anywho, Gnut came to me with a hook, and just tha night before I got tha unwanted news that one of my closest locstas had been gunned down. I was also blessed with "visuals" from his funeral. My piece/verse was inspired by this! I'm basically writing a letter to God askin' Him to bring all of my locs back, and let us all die at tha same time, so our families don't have to go through all of these separate heartbreaks, and so I don't have to keep getting names tattooed on my back.

**Bush is Saddam-like,
buryin' us alive in mass
graves. I'm pushin' this
Islam, but I feel like I'm
half-dead, half-slave.**

Sum Of All Fears

Everyone wants to know if tha kid has fears
I cried so it would show, but I had no tears
My life is like a forecast disguised by masks
Struggle and strife as I constantly realize my past
A storm is coming, but one just came
Tha Earth shook a 10.0 can't describe tha pain
My name ceremoniously changes, like that of hurricanes
Bi plans spiraled tornado style
Summertime is when things really got wild
Times like that are hard to explain
Relived on prison yards I silently pray for rain
Dear Heavenly Father, please re-water your seed
Peers now see my tears as my heart begins to bleed
Forgive me as I begin to cry
Rememberin' tha day my father shot me in my right eye
Physically, I recovered to become unblind
Spiritually, I suffered from a hole in tha mind
My vision now supercedes material form
Can you picture
In tha literal, your dreams bein' torn?
From my scholarship, I own tha actual scraps
I watched my superstar potential fall and collapse
How can I see tha future
Foresight, my friends, removes all sutures
I'll never be re-incarcerated,
But I can have new dreams if old nightmares are
eliminated
So many years
Is tha sum of too many fears.
(This was inspired by those of us who've been knocked
down, but refuse to stay down.)

I don't feel untouchable anymore because I'm now more in touch with what we call "reality." Back in the day, I thought I'll never die, grow old, or go to jail, but I'm experiencing it all every day of my life, physically, as well as mentally.

Check out the rest of King Yella BWO piece on page 74